ABJECTION, PLACE AND THE MODERN CITY
PARIS IN JACQUES TATI'S *PLAY TIME*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how cinema contributes to our knowledge of the modern city by examining Jacques Tati's representation of Paris in his 1967 comedy film *Play Time*. I argue that in the ultra-hygienic modern city depicted in the film, nature has become abject, resulting in its removal from the city. Hence, the threat of the abject keeps the modern citizen under control; this control is embedded in the rational, desensitised, modern architecture, which plays a significant role in creating the modern city. However, in the end the modern architecture is to a degree broken down, instigating a cavalcade of disorder, by M. Hulot, the main character, who in the role of a benevolent monster breaks this control, bringing a kind of freedom to the modern city. Furthermore, this thesis argues that Tati in his critique of the modernisation of Paris in the post-World War II period—and the intertwining of his lived experience of the city within his story telling—make *Play Time* a filmic document that informs our understanding of the city. Literature on the history of the urban modernisation of Paris during the 19th and 20th centuries and the literature addressing the cinematic explorations of the city are applied to investigate the research questions, in combination with works by authors Mary Douglas on "dirt" and social control, Julia Kristeva on abjection, and Robin Wood on political control. These three works are employed to explore how hygiene—urban, personal and social—and the abjectification of nature are used to control the citizens.

While *Play Time's* representation of Paris as a sterile, inhuman modern environment has been written about, the abjectification of nature in the modern city that underlies this representation has not been analysed in depth. The modern city of Paris depicted in *Play Time* is the ultimate culmination of the 19th century urban hygiene project carried out under Georges-Eugène Haussmann, for which a major reworking of the Paris sewers was fundamental. Before this project the streets ran with human excrement and other rotting organic material, and diseases such as cholera were common; in *Play Time* the city has become pristine yet sterile. In the film the modern city has been distilled into perfection. Reconsidering the post-war city and its architecture through this film provides further insights into how we may plan, design and live in cities today. If we take the lessons from *Play Time* into our architecture and planning—considering the complexity of our rational, irrational, imaginary and somatic selves—we may design and create better buildings and cities that work for, rather than against, their people.

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DECLARATION

I certify that this work does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any University and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed ..... L. Mackenzie .....

Louise Mackenzie

Friday, 17th July 2020

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INTRODUCTION

> But we do not get far if we do not try to understand what we call the political, economic, cultural and the historical are intertwined with what we call the imaginary, the emotional and indeed the somatic.
>
> Lorraine Mortimer (*Terror and Joy: The Films of Dusan Makavejev*, 2009, p. 188)

In reference to *Play Time*:

> I find I am still thinking about the beautiful and the sterile, and that scientific notion of the beautiful formula, where there is no residue and instead there is harmony and symmetry. I hope my world is never beautiful!
>
> Esther Anatolitis (email correspondence, 2007)

Jacques Tati, Play Time, The abject, Paris and the cinema

The film *Play Time*, directed by Jacques Tati, was released in 1967. It is set in Paris, in the near future, however, the traditional city remains unseen, except as images reflected off the ultra-hygienic modern glass architecture. This thesis argues that in the modernisation of Paris, as depicted in *Play* Time, nature has become abject, the modern architecture, in the film, separates the inhabitants and their city from nature and in turn this abjectification of nature is used to control the citizenry of modern Paris. The separation of nature and the city creates an urban environment which is ultra-hygienic, highly ordered but highly controlling of its citizens. In the modern city, as depicted in *Play Time*, the sensory engagement with the whole of life experience available in the unclean and disorderly traditional city of Paris has been eliminated. Furthermore, this thesis argues that, because of Tati's critique of the modernisation of Paris and his intimate familiarity with the city, *Play Time* is a filmic document which can inform our experience, our understanding, and our approaches to the design of architecture and the 21st century city.

Modern Paris in *Play Time* is a city consisting entirely of rectilinear, geometric, rational, towers of glass and steel, moreover the film indicates that this building type ubiquitous in modern Paris is that of every other modern city (*see figure 0.1*). The natural materials of the old city such as stone and wood are absent. It is a machine-made city

"…purified from the odium of human work" (Wagner, 2008, p. 62). Separated from the filth of the human body, the machine-made city is inherently hygienic. The buildings in *Play Time* are similar in appearance to real-world examples of modern glass office skyscrapers, such as Lever House, New York (1952) the UN Headquarters, New York (1952), Esso Tower in Paris (1964), and ICI House, Melbourne (1958).[1]

Figure 0.1: A travel agency in modern Paris
Paris as it appears in Play Time consists of the same building type throughout the city—rectilinear towers. The film indicates in the travel agency scenes that every other modern city in the world now looks like modern Paris. Image source: Still from Play Time: PlayTime, Jacques Tati (1967) © Les Films de Mon Oncle – Specta Films CEPEC

Play Time is Tati's third film out of four where he plays the character Monsieur Hulot. M. Hulot appears to be slightly off balance as he moves. The audience rarely hears him speak. He is often seen with a pipe and umbrella. His trousers are too short, and he almost always wears an overcoat and hat, and not a hat that would go with a suit, but one that looks like it would crumple up and fit in a pocket. He is clearly an outsider in the modern city of Paris. He has come here from outside the city on a matter of business that the audience never discovers. A group of American tourists have also arrived in Paris, but as far as the

[1] The architects of these buildings are Lever House, New York (1952) Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; the UN Headquarters, New York (1952) design team led by Wallace Harrison, Le Corbusier was a part of this team; ICI House, Melbourne (1958) Bates, Smart & McCutcheon; and Esso Tower, Paris (1964) Gréber, Lathrop & Douglass.

viewer knows they never actually get to visit any of the traditional Paris tourist sites. The only tourist identified by name is Barbara. She is M. Hulot's love interest in a very understated way. Barbara and M. Hulot pass each other several times in the film before they finally meet at the Royal Garden, a bourgeois nightclub. *Play Time* covers two days and one night and, is structured into three sections with a coda.

The first section covers the activities of M. Hulot and the American tourists in the office district. Set in the residential district, at nightfall the second section of the film begins. M. Hulot runs into an old army friend and is invited into his new modern apartment, with enormous glass windows facing the street. He eventually escapes from the apartment and in wandering the city comes across another old friend who invites him to the Royal Garden nightclub, which is having its opening. This is the beginning of the third section of the film and is set in the leisure district. During this long scene the climax of the film occurs. The modern architecture which has been so restrictive throughout the film is destroyed by M. Hulot taking on the role as monster of chaos and disorder, in doing this the modern city starts to become humanised. The second day, the coda, covers only a small period of film time, approximately 12 minutes, while the whole film runs for just under two hours. As dawn breaks, M. Hulot and his group of new friends are leaving the nightclub, still animated and in a high mood they go to the drug store to continue the party. M. Hulot and Barbara spend the day together. At the end of the day the American tourists, including Barbara, board the bus, which travels through a traffic roundabout that has transformed into a merry-go-round. The roots of this film, its aesthetic and its perspective stem from Tati's own history, and the history of architecture and urbanism within the city of Paris.

Play Time's writer, director and main actor, was born Jacques Tatischeff in 1909 in Saint Germain-en-Laye, 13 miles to the west of Paris.[2] After finishing school he began an apprenticeship in the family picture framing gallery. Located in the centre of Paris, near Gare Saint-Lazare, the gallery was owned by his maternal grandfather and managed by his father.

[2] Since Tati's birth year is noted by various sources as 1907 and 1909, I have chosen to follow the French Cinematheque and use 1909, which held an exhibition in 2009 to celebrate Tati's work and the centenary of his birth.

Instead of completing the apprenticeship, Tati commenced a career as a comic mime in the music halls of Paris. He finally found his métier as an auteur—writing, directing and performing in films from the late 1940s until the early 1970s, during which time he made five feature films: *Jour de Fête* (1949), *Mr Hulot's Holiday* (1953), *Mon Oncle* (1958), *Play Time* (1967) and *Traffic* (1971).[3]

Play Time was made during the rapid urban modernisation of Paris in the post-World War II period, which drastically reshaped the lives of its citizens. This was the second wave of rapid urban transformation Paris had experienced—the first occurring in the mid-19th century under the administration of Georges-Eugène Haussmann. *Play Time* is a filmic lament for the loss of the city of Tati's youth characterised by the Napoleon III-Haussmann boulevards. The absence of the 19th century city in the film shows the depth to which Tati felt this loss. Tati's body of film work covers a period in France that left few aspects of life untouched. Kristin Ross, literature and cultural theorist, writes that,

> The speed with which French society was transformed after the war from a rural, empire-oriented, Catholic country into a fully industrialized, decolonized, and urban one meant that the things modernization needed...burst onto a society that still cherished prewar outlooks with all of the force, excitement, disruption, and horror of the genuinely new (Ross, 1995, p. 4).

Tati's first feature film *Jour de Fete*, released in 1949, set in a small rural village, offers an explicit critique of the modernisation of French life. In Tati's subsequent explorations of the experience of rapid urban modernisation, seen particularly in his films *Mon Oncle, Play Time* and *Traffic,* he questions our relationships with the urban fabric and how this literally and figuratively shapes the way we live. Given his age—Tati was 36 in 1945—he would have been aware through direct experience of the urban modernisation that was occurring in Paris during the post-World War II period and how it was transforming Haussmann's boulevards, the Paris of Tati's youth and early adulthood. Tati's experience and knowledge of

[3] Some refer to *Parade*, the television special Tati made in Sweden in 1974, as his sixth feature film. While I agree it is a valuable piece of work, it is more characteristic of television programs of the period than it is of Tati's other feature films and thus should not be classified as a feature film.

Paris and modern urban life are reflected in his films. His body of film work as a director documents the experience of this rapid post-war modernisation of France.

There is a complexity in Tati's work. While all his films are comedies, expressing joy, *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time*, especially, also express a sorrow, as well as a promise for the future. A further complexity seen in Tati's work, is his thoughts on modernisation; for him, it is neither wholly positive nor wholly negative, it is both. The architect and theorist Iain Borden argues that,

> …it was not modernist architecture in itself which Tati found repellent. As he stated, '[i]f I had been against modern architecture I would have shown the most ugly buildings'. Instead, Tati made Tativille 'so that no architect could say anything against it. I took the finest I could. These buildings are beautiful' (2002, p. 218).

The scholar Laurent Marie argues that, "Tati was always adamant that he was not against modernization or modern architecture per se" (2001, p. 259). Marie writes, "Tati explains that he is 'against a certain way of life, a sterile homogenization which affects the way we think as much as the place where we live'" (2001, p. 259). *Play Time* clearly suggests that the minds of the automaton-like modern citizens mirror the homogeneous architecture.

The complexity of moving between joy and sorrow and being for and against aspects of modernisation are intertwined in Tati's films. While *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* explicitly criticise modern architecture and urbanism, they also suggest there is a joyfulness and even benefits to be had in the modernising world that the new architecture characterises. *Mon Oncle* ends with a curtain closing over the soon to be defunct old square, however the final scene is of M. Hulot and other passengers, dancing to a jazzy tune as they board an aeroplane, an emblem of modern life. In *Play Time*, the Paris of Tati's youth has vanished, but the film ends in a scene where a traffic roundabout has been turned into a merry-go-round. In an interview in 1968 Jean-Andre Fieschi and Jean Narboni, from *Cahier du cinema*, asked of Tati "You always talk about your film [*Play Time*] as a funny film, but there is great sadness in it too" (2017, p. 113). Tati replied that,

> I had a grandfather who was Russian, and I look a lot like him. So this sadness that you mention, it comes a bit from my Slavic side; it's this odd sense of being happy to hear sad news because we need the sad news as well. But this sadness also has its share of generosity and warmth, [expressed] in the carousel scene at the end [of *Play Time*]… (Fieschi and Narboni, 2017, p. 113).

The closing shots of the film, following the carousel scene, are of the bus with the American tourists travelling back out to the airport, the film then fades almost to black, implying an uncertain future, stepping into the unknown; in addition to trepidation there is also a promise, this is the inherent ever-changing character of modern life.[4] Tati, as it turns out, is a modern.[5] Modern architecture and urbanism had a devastating effect, at least for some, on the lives of the people of Paris but they also provide benefits. Tati himself said "I find it ridiculous to say you are against modern architecture, you are against a school where the sun can get in, a well-built hospital. It's ridiculous".[6]

Tati's film *Mon Oncle* was used in an exhibition in the French Pavilion at the 2014 Venice Biennale. Curated by architectural historian Jean-Louis Cohen, the exhibition was titled *Modernity: menace or promise?* Rem Koolhaas, the curator of the architecture section of the Biennale, asked for submissions which addressed the theme "Absorbing Modernity 1914–2014".[7] Cohen explains that in the early part of the 20th century modern architects in Paris, and elsewhere, provided possible solutions through their design ideas for making a

[4] The idea of this ever-changing aspect of modern life is contained in the phrase "all that is solid that melts into air". Marshall Berman borrowed this phrase from Marx for the title of his book published in 1982 (Berman, 1995, p. 15).

[5] Tati is Marshal Berman's 19th century modern. Berman argues that 19th century thinkers on modernity, such as Marx and Baudelaire, may have been overwhelmed by the constant change in their lives modernity brought, but they also looked forward positively when considering the future. Berman argues that this is different to 20th century thinking on modernity, such as Foucault, who thought of the future (and the present) as bleak (Berman, 1988, p. 34-36).

[6] This quote is from a film segment which was a part of a display at the *Jacques Tati Deux Temps, Trois Movements…* exhibition held at the Cinémathèque Française in 2009. I attended this exhibition in March 2009 and transcribed the English subtitles that accompanied Tati's spoken word.

[7] The Venice Biennale has several sections each year, including, dance, music, and cinema; the Venice International Film Festival is one of the world's oldest festivals of film.

better life for the cities' inhabitants. *Modernity: menace or promise?* explores the contrast between the general public's expectations of what the architects proposed pre-World War II and their disillusionment with the realisation of the ideas in the built form post-World War II (Cohen, 2014, la Biennale di Venezia Channel: video).[8] The pavilion had four sections which addressed the themes of the Grand Ensemble and Prefabrication, and the work of Jean Prouvé (designer) and Jacques Tati (filmmaker). It examined Tati's work through a 1:10 scale model of the modern house that appears in *Mon Oncle,* along with images from the film. Cohen states, that "This house is a symbol of modernist houses that were very seductive as images but very often didn't function and in a way disappointed their inhabitants" (la Biennale di Venezia Channel, 2014). This is also the case for the architecture in *Play Time,* as Tati claims that the modern city in the film is beautiful to look at (Borden, 2002, p. 218), but uncomfortable for the body, at times it even causes harm, as is the case when M. Giffard bangs his nose on a glass door. The pavilion, *Modernity: menace or promise?*, provides a contemporary insight into Tati's work, showing the keen relevance of his work today. The exhibition itself is an example of how *Play Time* as a filmic document is used to understand the city and architecture.

The ideas that modern architects developed in the first half of the 20th century were greatly influenced by concepts of hygiene and the role light, sun and air could play in creating hygienic modern architecture (Overy, 2007). In turn, the ideas developed by modern architects in the first half of the 20th century had a huge impact on architectural and urban design in the post-war period. In *Play Time* the city is clean, perhaps even odourless, the urban form allows for a plenitude of sun light, the city is airy, and everything is glass, floor to ceiling, wall to wall, glass being one of the modern architects' ideal hygienic building materials. However, the city in *Play Time* is missing the lifeblood, meaning the heart and soul of a place, and the chaos and messiness that is life, which the old city had in abundance. In modern Paris, as depicted in *Play Time*, a fully sensual experience of the city is no longer available, and this contrasts greatly with the experience of the actual city in the 19th century and first half of the 20th century.

[8] The modern houses designed in the 1920s and 1930s were commissioned by wealthy clients. It was not until the post-World War II period that modern architecturally designed homes became widespread amongst the population of Paris and France, and other locations globally (Martin, 2014, p. 138).

The cleansing of Paris happened over a long period. It began with the "Haussmannisation" of the city in the mid-19th century. Before this urban hygiene project began many of the streets were incredibly dirty, narrow and without direct sunlight, creating illness and death in their wake. The streets operated both as thoroughfares and actual sewers: many of the streets were open sewers, with central drains that were abundant with human excrement and other rotting organic waste (Jordan, 1995, p. 94). From the 1850s onwards Paris increasingly became cleaner, but this was a long and gradual process, lasting well into the 20th century.

Tati would have known people who grew up in Paris without a flushing toilet that connected to the sewer system, perhaps even he himself was without this modern convenience. The project of connecting all the houses to the city sewer was not completed until the 1930s (Gandy, 1999, p. 36-37). Less than a decade before Tati was born an article appeared addressing the state of the toilets in Paris and how offensive they were to the sense of smell. It was published in the 18 November 1899 edition of the *Lancet* and titled "The drainage of Paris and the exhibition"[9]. The writer goes to great lengths to describe how unpleasant the small sunless courtyards of the Parisian apartment buildings were at this time and to inform readers that this was the source of the great stench experienced through much of the city. The courtyard is where the portable toilet cans were kept while waiting to be collected, it was also the place pipes would dispense their effluent from a flushing toilet; often the toilet and its plumbing malfunctioned contributing to the foul smell.[10] The article was written in light of the visitors who were expected to arrive in their millions for the *Exposition Universelle de 1900* (Universal/World Exhibition) to be held in Paris the following year. Tati was not born until 1909 but it is a little distance historically from 1900; it is likely that the inadequate toilets and the resulting smell accompanied Tati through his childhood and into his early adulthood. The concern for urban hygiene and personal hygiene continued and increased in intensity in France through the 20th century, so much so that when Tati made *Play Time* in the 1960s he was able to create a viable plot line where the city has been

[9] The author was unnamed but noted as, "From our special commissioner".

[10] The problem he suggests was in part due to landlords not replacing the wide pipes of the portable can toilet system with the new narrow pipes required for the flushing toilet system.

so thoroughly cleansed—in the attempt to rid the city of deadly germs, diseases such as cholera—that life only just exists.

The modernisation of the city included not only the physical cleansing but also what has been referred to as the "moral cleansing" or "social cleansing" of the city (Jordan, 1995, p. 351). In the first two-thirds of *Play Time,* Tati presents the characters as one homogenised demographic, the bourgeoisie. This depiction of Paris in many ways reflects the claim that Haussmann's Paris emptied out the working class to create a city for the bourgeois and their capital. Jordan writes that, "It took eighteen years of deliberate imperial policy to wrest the streets from the sans-culottes and impose a bourgeois culture on the city" (1995, p. 351). This "moral cleansing" meant a slow dispersal of the working classes from the centre of Paris to the periphery, with the underlying intention of removing the threat of revolt from the city. *Play Time* depicts a homogenised bourgeoisie, a clean and well-behaved bourgeoisie living in the modern city of Paris. In the film, the workers, long associated with uncleanliness due to their labour in part at least, live outside the city boundary, along with nature and other abject elements that have been expelled.

In the modern city of Paris that *Play Time* presents, all that is perceived to be abject has been removed—the chaos and grime, the narrow byways filled with filth and squalor—that characterised Paris in earlier periods. In achieving one of modernity's aims—the domination of nature for human emancipation (Kaika, 2005, p. 12)—modern Paris has been thoroughly cleansed, but in achieving this state, the city is barely liveable. In the Paris depicted in *Play Time*, removing nature from the modern city, with its smells, tastes, and textures, means these senses have nothing to respond to. People receive their environment through the senses, without which vital connections are lost.[11] The ultra-hygienic city has become inhuman, in part at least, through its deprivation of sensory experience. Sensory

[11] Susan Buck-Morss writes in her long article on Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that the meaning of aesthetics originally was about apprehending reality through the senses, not about the about the contemplation of art using the only the mind. She writes that, "The original field of aesthetics is not art but reality—corporeal, material nature. As Terry Eagleton writes: 'Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body.'[11] It is a form of cognition, achieved through taste, touch, hearing, smell—the whole corporeal sensorium" (Buck-Morss, 1988 or 1995, p. 6). She argues that Benjamin, in the essay, moves the meaning of aesthetics one hundred and eighty degrees, back to its original.

engagement has been eliminated in this antiseptic modern city. As sociologist Richard Sennett wrote in the mid-1990s, "[It is] …the sensory deprivation which seems to be the curse of most modern buildings…" (1994, p. 15). Even today many buildings seem to provide little sensory stimulus beyond that for the eye (Pallasmaa, 2005).

Nature has come to be perceived as abject in the modern city—just as human excrement, in the modernisation of the Paris sewers in the mid-19th century, came to be read as abject (Gandy, 1999). Nature in the Paris of *Play Time* is rejected, hidden away, and almost denied its existence. Nature in modern Paris, as depicted in *Play Time,* is unacceptable. Any evidence of the natural yet messy elements of human life, the cycle of life, the grime, the evidence of our functioning bodies, the organic garbage and human waste, once so abundant in the old Paris street, is absent in *Play Time.* Even evidence of the human marks of time is absent. Stairs are not seen to be worn by numerous feet, and brass handrails, should they exist, lack the shiny patches where they have been repeatedly touched. The architecture that makes up the urban environment in this pristine modern city is clean, neat, tidy, and well ordered.

In *Play Time* 19th century Paris has been entirely demolished, with the exception of one small nameless and obscure column monument that goes unnoticed. The 19th century city appears in *Play Time* only as reflections off the modern glass architecture. The reflections of the famous tourist sites seen in the film are the Eiffel Tower (1889), the Arc de Triomphe (1806-1836), the Place de la Concorde (1755) and the church of Sacré Cœur (1875-1919). In *Play Time* traditional Paris is not seen, except as immaterial reflections, and there is one remaining unnoticed statue, seen in the distance only by the film viewer. Perhaps it is sitting on the very edge of the modern city, where nature begins—the statue is accompanied by what appears to be green foliage, perhaps trees beyond the city boundary. Modern Paris has been replaced, as the architect Le Corbusier (1867-1965) suggested in his *Voisin Plan*, with tall glass tower buildings.[12]

[12] Graphic representations of Paris are seen in the film. There are drawings of the Eiffel Tower on the wallpaper in one of the stands at the Trade Fair, for example.

The Paris of *Play Time* in some ways echoes the tabula rasa of Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan* for Paris, created in the early 1920s, in which he suggested demolishing a large area of the existing urban fabric, on the Right Bank, and replacing it with modern buildings, tall towers of glass ([1924] 1998, p. 281). Tati created the film in such a way that historic Paris is no longer material, nothing is left of the historic Paris of Tati's childhood but one tiny column monument. In the post-World War II period, almost a quarter of Paris was demolished and rebuilt (Evenson, 1979, p. 309-310). Paris appears as it does in *Play Time*, in part, due to the relationships between the modern architect Le Corbusier, the city of Paris and Tati. Rather than a fiction, Tati's Paris in *Play Time* represents a partial truth.

Tati's artistic motivation for the creation of *Play Time* establishes this film as a document which can be used to understand the city of Paris. This thesis addresses the intersection of the actual, tangible city experienced by Tati with its creatively constructed analogue in the film. It argues that cinematic constructions and filmic storytelling can be a significant means of understanding aspects of architecture and the city, as the cinema can convey the experience and knowledge an individual has of a city. In the case of *Play Time,* it is Tati's intellectual and artistic response to ideas such as Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan*, but also his lived experience of the city, that informs the filmic storytelling. Jacques Tati had strong connections with the area on the Right Bank of Paris, that Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan* proposed to demolish in its entirety. The Right Bank is where Tati's family operated the picture framing gallery, and where Tati, at various times in his life, both lived and worked. This thesis argues that *Play Time* can provide invaluable lessons about being in the world not only in our rational selves, but also our imaginations, our emotions and our bodies—and if we take this understanding into our architecture and planning, we will be able to design buildings and cities that respond more effectively to our complex human needs.

It is the Napoleon III-Haussmann boulevards that Tati laments losing in *Play Time*—the city of Paris he experienced from childhood through to early adulthood. While Tati's experience of Paris began long after Haussmann stopped working in 1870, as the historian David P. Jordan notes, for the most part, Paris remained the same and only changed significantly in the post-war period. He writes that "…the pre-eminence of the boulevards, of

an extroverted outdoor, theatrical urban life was not seriously challenged until after World War Two" (Jordan, 1995, p. 348-349). It is the massive changes in Paris during the post-war period, the modernisation of the city, and the attendant social change, including increasingly popular ideas and practices related to hygiene, that form a significant part of Tati's artistic motivation for *Play Time*.

The way in which Paris is represented in *Play Time* is a direct result of the history of the city and Tati's ideas about it based on his experience. The filmic perspective of the director who experienced this massive urban transformation is useful in an exploration of the interconnections between our films, our cities and ourselves. The Paris in *Play Time*—a set entirely constructed specifically for the film—bears a direct relationship to the actual city and therefore the people who live in it. It is the contention of this thesis that films are able to activate unspoken narratives of architecture and the city. By "unspoken narratives" I mean the untold stories of architecture. Film helps architecture to "speak". In many ways, until a film is made about a space, a building or a city its story remains untold. This is not only about our individual relationships with architecture, but it is also about how film enables us to share stories about and knowledge of architecture and a city. Film enables this conversation. For example, if we see the Eiffel Tower in a fiction film each of us recognise it and while it could mean something different for each of us, there is still a crossing point where the fiction film connects with the real tower, which can provide commonality, however small, between people. Even in a fiction film something of what is real remains.

The traditional city of Paris in *Play Time* is experienced through image alone, apart from the small unnoticed monument—the old city is only experienced by the sense of sight. As stated above, the historic tourist sites/sights are only seen as reflections off the modern glass architecture—and therefore are intangible. The characters in the film are trapped in a superficial existence; the traditional city with its depths, and complexity, smells, textures and sounds, has been cleansed and simplified. The filth, most of it natural, of the 19th century street has been removed from the modern city, but so has the chaos and exhilaration that enriched city life. Nature, now viewed as disgusting, deemed to be abject, has disappeared almost completely from the modern city of Paris in *Play Time*—making it conspicuous by its

absence, resulting in the dehumanisation of the city's inhabitants. In providing a clean environment the modern city separates its people from nature. The repression of what is now deemed to be abject, nature, has created a city with limited sensory stimulus, which is completely controlling of its citizens' bodies and minds. The city and its people are thoroughly cleansed, and their behaviour totally controlled.

The people of the city have become homogenised and this also requires them to behave as expected—as the architecture, and the city which it creates, dictates. The exception is M. Hulot and his new-found, like-minded, friends who share a similar way of being in the world. When they finally meet at the Royal Garden nightclub—at the film's climax—the modern architecture is partly destroyed, allowing for the first time a sensual engagement with the built environment and each other, through eating, drinking, dancing, touching, smelling, and moving freely. The people are engaging with their senses and delighting in their bodies and those of others with uninhibited abandonment.

The following outlines the research questions and the explorations undertaken in each of the chapters. Chapter One, "The abject: dirt, power & control" examines the separation of nature and the city through psychological aspects of the human experience. In this chapter I argue that this separation is maintained through the abjectification of nature. Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An essay on abjection* is employed to examine the modern architecture of Paris in *Play Time* which has rendered nature abject. The exclusion of nature plays a major role in creating a controlled built environment, which in turn is controlling of the individuals who live within it. The controlling aspect of modern Paris is further explored in Chapters Five and Six. The modern city in the film is spotlessly clean. Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* is used to analyse *Play Time* with regard to ideas that concern the clean and unclean, the pure and impure, order and disorder, in relation to boundaries, and how the transgression of these boundaries may be used to control the citizenry. In the modern city of Paris, keeping the body clean and well ordered, to fall in line with the clean and well-ordered city, is another way of creating the "good" citizen. Film theorist Robin Wood's essay "An introduction to the American horror

film" is used to explore these concepts. This urban environment serves to create the ideal modern bourgeois capitalist citizen.

Chapter Two, "The old sewers of Paris: The abject street and urban hygiene", explores the separation of nature and the city through Haussmann's renovation of the city's underground sewer system. In Chapter Two I argue that the ultra-clean city of Paris in *Play Time* can be read as the ultimate culmination of Haussmann's urban hygiene project. These works were a part of Haussmann's mid-19th century modernisation of Paris. The urban history of Paris provides a context for *Play Time*. These texts also provide a background and illustration of "Hausmann's Paris", the city that Tati knew until the post-World War II period when the second great wave of urban modernisation, explored in Chapter Four, occurred in Paris. It is these two urban events that Tati reflects on in *Play Time*, one created the city he loved, the other destroyed it.

Chapter Three, "Cinema as constructing perspectives of the city" examines the intersections of architecture and film, specifically how the cinema contributes to the understanding of the city. The rational, the emotional, the imaginary, dreams and memories, and the somatic are significant aspects of the human experience. Our complex human existence is readily available in film but often left out of our architectural and urban proposals. In Chapter Three I argue that this complexity was not considered in the design of modern Paris, depicted in *Play Time*, thereby creating a city that works against rather than for its human inhabitants. Cinematic constructions and filmic storytelling enable an understanding of architecture and urbanism through the lived experience of the city, which includes the emotional connections to it. Films such as *Play Time* can inform the design of architecture and the city.

Chapter Four, "Paris Connections: The footsteps of Jacques Tati and Le Corbusier" maps the interconnections between the filmmaker, the architect and the city through the places where they both lived and worked, and the common social and professional links they shared with artists, architects and designers. I argue in Chapter Four that Tati's artistic motivation for the making of *Play Time,* including the way Paris is represented in the film, can be seen in the director's connections with Paris itself and in his knowledge of modern

architecture and modern architects—these connections establish *Play Time* as a filmic document. This chapter explores the modern architectural and urban ideas that influenced the modernisation of Paris in the post-World War II period, while Chapter Two illustrates Haussmann's Paris that Tati knew for the first half of his life, the Paris he laments losing in *Play Time.* It is the popular discourse on modern architecture and Tati's experience of this urban modernisation that is reflected in his film,

Chapter Five, "The abjectification of nature: A city without dirt, where the ideal modern body is an image", undertakes an analysis of the two domestic scenes in the film, the apartment and the hotel room scenes, in which the people are depicted as mannequins and ghosts. The bodies in *Play Time* are often represented as bloodless—as automatons, as cut-outs, two-dimensional photographic representations. I argue in Chapter Five that the bodily fluids threaten the modern city because they breach the city's established levels of antiseptic hygiene—threatening disorder and chaos—therefore the body has been diminished to the point where it is only just human. The human body disturbs the purity of the modern architecture. In conjunction with the analysis of the two domestic scenes, an investigation of the four reflected images of the tourist sites/sights in *Play Time* is conducted using the relationships between site—the physical, and sight—the apprehension of an image. These sites are only ever seen in the film in reflection, off the walls, windows and doors of the modern glass architecture. Traditional Paris is only present in the modern city as reflected images—the ideal condition for the human body in the modern city is also when it is an image—as Barbara's ghostly image reflected off the glass window in her hotel room illustrates.

Chapter Six, "The horror film genre, nature, bodies, space, monsters and *Play Time*" explores overlapping themes found in both the horror film genre and *Play Time*—nature, the body, space, and the monster. In horror films, nature is often represented as fearful and vengeful. In *Play Time* nature is not vengeful, but still threatens the modern city, as examined in Chapter Five. In *Play Time* the modern city can be read as an isolated space of the horror film, with distinct tangible and intangible borders. However, unlike many horror films, it is only the film viewers who find the modern city unsettling. The modern citizens in

Play Time do not seem to realise that they are trapped. The film scholar Robin Wood argues that the monster is a disruptor of normality who subverts the power of the dominant ideology. In Chapter Six I argue that it is M. Hulot who is the monster in *Play Time*, and not the modern city, as the film viewer might first expect. As the benevolent monster M. Hulot breaks down the modern architecture, in which the capitalist corporate power is embedded, breaking the power the city has over the people and bringing a kind of freedom.

LITERATURE REVIEW & METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This thesis examines Paris as it is depicted in Jacques Tati's film *Play Time* (1967) in terms of urban hygiene and the abjectification of nature. The research question specifically explores the role that the interaction between hygiene and the abject has in the separation of the city and nature—and of nature and the human body—which in turn creates a highly controlled urban environment with greatly diminished sensory input for its inhabitants. Furthermore, this research aims to identify *Play Time's* representation of the city as a filmic document which can inform our experience, understanding of, and approaches to architecture and urban design.

The critical literature on French filmmaker Jacques Tati covers his feature films which were made during the post-war period in France. Tati's work both documents and critiques the modernisation of France in this period. His films *Play Time* and *Mon Oncle* (1958) specifically address Paris, as does *Traffic* (1971) to a degree. In *Mon Oncle* Tati compares a traditional part of Paris with a new modern part of the city. The film not only addresses issues of hygiene and the modern home—which is a clinical environment in *Mon Oncle*—but it also suggests that modern architecture and urbanism actively diminishes community between people, an idea that was carried through and explored further in *Play Time*.

If we consider all Tati's films from *Jour de Fete* (1949), a story set in a pedestrian village—where the mode of transport is predominantly by foot—to *Traffic* (1971), which is set predominantly on a highway that runs from France to the Netherlands, what becomes apparent is the change in the way we move about our built environments, and so a change in how people experience and use public spaces. The street changes from being predominantly occupied by pedestrians, to becoming the privileged ground of motorists, in turn creating cities that work for cars (machines) rather than people. In *Play Time*, the Parisian streets are dominated by motor traffic, the footpaths are only for pedestrians to move from A to B. There is a very limited possibility of a lively activity—of the interactive kind found in the old square in *Mon Oncle*—occurring on the modern Parisian streets. This is because the architecture and urban design limit it from occurring. It seems doubtful that rich

vitality is to be had anywhere in the modern city, not at least as life was known in the old Paris square depicted in *Mon Oncle*. The residents lived, worked and played in and around the old square. It is significant that Tati named his film *Play Time*; enjoying oneself is important for one's wellbeing, but the modern city in this film does not allow for free play.

The literature on Tati and his film work is here broken broadly into two groups while acknowledging that there are crossovers between the two. The first group I will refer to as "cinema studies texts", predominantly from the discipline of cinema studies, and the second group I will refer to as "film and architecture texts", predominantly from the disciplines of architecture and French studies.

Cinema studies texts

There is a great deal of cinema studies literature on Tati's work, beginning in the late 1940s in response to Tati's first feature *Jour de fête* (1949). The key texts were published from the late 1940s up until the 1980s, keeping in mind these are broad boundaries, and that cinema studies texts on Tati do appear after this period. Jacques Tati's work has been written about in various ways, in terms of film comedy, Mast (1979), Armes (1970), Houston (1959), Totaro (2012), Rosenbaum (1971-72; 1973; 1980; 1983; 1998; 2006), Bazin (1983); some have written about the M. Hulot character Bazin (1983), Gonzalez (2005), Rohdie (2009; 2012), (Combs, 2004); and M. Hulot 's 'romances' Combs (2004). Others have written about how Tati uses sound, Fawell (1990), Kirihara (1990), de Valck (2005); and his use of colour Clayton (2010), Street (2010). Some authors have written biographical pieces showing how Tati's experiences of Paris and France are expressed in his films Carrière (1985), Bellos (1999), Christley (2002). Others, again, have written about Tati's film work in terms of theme, film structure and form Thompson (1978; 1988), Fischer (1976; 1978; 1983).

There is a body of work on Tati which tends to be mostly descriptive, such as books by authors Brent Maddock (1977), James Harding (1984), and Penelope Gilliatt (1976) and essays by authors including Andrew C. Mayer (1955), John K. Simon (1959) and Pierre Sorlin (2000), yet these works often contain ideas for further exploration and they are often quoted, especially in the "film and architecture texts" on Tati. Michel Chion (1979) writes poetically on Tati's work. The key critical cinema studies texts for this thesis, on Tati's work,

are by Kristin Thompson (1978; 1988), Andre Bazin (1983) and Lucy Fischer (1976; 1978; 1983). I explore these authors' texts in more detail as their critical work explores the complexity of Jacques Tati's film making. Their texts have informed my understanding of Tati's work from a cinema studies perspective, which is important when discussing and analysing *Play Time* from an architectural and design perspective—a perspective which is largely missing from the "film and architecture" literature on Tati's work.

Both Bazin and Thompson focus on narrative, or rather, the lack of a strong narrative in Tati's film work. Thompson has written on Tati's films *Mr Hulot's Holiday* (1953) and *Play Time* in terms of their form and structure, which she believes is similar in both films. In her 1978 journal article, "Parameters of the open film: Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot", Thompson uses Noel Burch's idea of the "open film" to establish her argument that, in the absence of a strong narrative, it is the formal elements which create the film's meaning. She argues that the "main structural principle" that Tati uses in this film is "overlap" (Thompson, 1978, p. 23), a term used to explain that when one action or event is ending on screen in the foreground, the next action or event is beginning in the background. This has a similar effect to the linking elements in narrative events—allowing us to make sense of the film as a whole. Thompson suggests that our understanding of *Mr Hulot's Holiday* derives less from the narrative of the film than from its form and structure.

In a chapter from her book *Breaking the Glass Armour: Neoformalist Film Analysis*, titled "Boredom on the Beach: Triviality and Humor in Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot", Thompson builds upon the idea of overlap proposed in the 1978 article. However, the book chapter has a different aim, which is to show how "…an analyst can go about formulating a dominant for a work" (Thompson, 1988, p. 89). She writes that, "…the dominant is a formal principle that controls the work at every level" (Thompson, 1988, p. 89). For Thompson, in this film, the dominant is about the relationship or tension between foreground and background elements. Here this tension is between the "…traditional humorous narrative ... [and] the insertion of boring moments and trivial actions" (Thompson, 1988, p. 96). In the chapter "*Play Time*: Comedy on the edge of Perception" in the same book, Thompson aims to show that *Play Time* has a "parametric form". She claims that, "In general, we may

characterise as parametric those films that allow the play of stylistic devices a significant degree of independence from the narrative functioning and motivation" (Thompson, 1988, p. 247). These two chapters form a part of the larger project of her book, which as the title suggests, is about neoformalist film analysis. While Thompson's idea of the "dominant" and the "parametric form" will not be used directly to answer my key research question, her discussion on narrative, form and structure in Tati's work contributes to the understanding of *Play Time.*

Bazin takes a different approach of the narrative in *Mr Hulot's Holiday.* He raises significant points in his 1953 essay "Hulot and Time", an exploration of *Mr Hulot's Holiday* in terms of narrative, the M. Hulot character and temporality. Bazin discusses the change in rhythm of holiday time compared to working time in the rest of the year. He argues that there is not a strong narrative in this film because narrative marks time and *Mr Hulot's Holiday* is intended to be a place out of time, beyond traditional temporal conventions. Furthermore, Bazin suggests that M. Hulot disappears from time completely, and only reappears each holiday season. The fluidity of time, as Bazin refers to it, in this film is about a poetic space, one in which the elements of the film can be moved around, in our minds, to create meaning, as Pierre Sorlin also implies (2000, p. 110-111). It would appear that setting the film in holiday time is significant. The film is set in a time outside of day-to-day existence, yet it is something still connected to human experience.

Bazin argues that the character of M. Hulot has the capacity to subvert the social order, which defines codes of behaviour that in themselves "trap us": keeping us from each other and ourselves. He writes, "…Hulot is all grace; …and the disorder that he introduces is that of tenderness and freedom" (Bazin, 1983, p. 151). This idea is important for my argument later in this thesis—that in *Play Time*, the social order is created in part through bourgeois manners, as it is in *M. Hulot's Holiday.* I will argue that it is hygiene which plays a larger role in creating the social order in *Play Time* and that it is the subversion of the ultra-hygienic environment created by the modern architecture which allows for social change, chaos and pleasure.

Both Thompson and Bazin's work critically engage with the complexity of Tati's filmic storytelling, contributing to an overall understanding of Tati's work and how he makes his filmic arguments. An interview conducted with Tati in 1958 by Andre Bazin and Francois Truffaut, after *Mon Oncle* and before *Play Time*, first published in *Cahiers du Cinema* and then published in translation in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* in 2002, is important for this project because it clarifies the direct connections between Tati, the city of Paris and the film *Play Time*. During the interview Tati discusses his views of the Paris of the period (1958): he believes that everything now looks the same, and a cafe is indistinguishable from a pharmacy (Bazin and Truffaut, 2002, p. 296). This idea of hygiene and a reduction of sensual input encapsulates the central design idea for the set of *Play Time*, which is modern Paris—a city that takes control over sensual pleasure and humanity.

Like Thompson and Bazin, Lucy Fischer's work provides insights into Tati's unique filmic approach. Fischer's PhD thesis *"Homo Ludens! An analysis of four films by Jacques Tati"*[13] (1978) explores the formal elements of four of Tati's films. Her thesis investigates Tati's comedy and the themes of leisure and play in terms of how they structure the films (Fischer, 1978). In a later article, "Jour de Fete: Americans in Paris", Fischer argues that the formal and thematic seeds which become more apparent in Tati's later works are already apparent in *Jour de Fete*. She claims that the key theme which runs throughout Tati's films is leisure within the context of modern life (Fischer, 1983). While leisure is an important theme and can be seen to a lesser and greater extent in all five of Tati's feature films, I argue that the modern city—ideas of how the built environment of the city or town shapes the lives of the people who live there—is another key theme throughout Tati's film work, now more evident than that of leisure given the distance and perspective of writing in the early 21st century. The formal elements that Fischer identifies in *Jour de Fete* that can be seen throughout Tati's work are the long shots (space), long takes (time), Tati's particular use of sound, his use of colour, visual misinterpretation in relation to the jokes and the spatial complexity—that is, action happening at the same time in the background and foreground.

[13] Homo is Latin for human, and Ludens is playing. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* is also the title of a book by Johan Huizinga, originally published in 1938. Fischer used Huizinga's term in her PhD thesis title (Fischer, 1978, p. 8).

Fischer also argues that in *Jour de Fete* we can see Tati beginning to make an individual yet French type of film comedy which differs substantially from the American styles of film comedy. The comic style which Fischer notes as French and individual to Tati, rather than American, is established through the angle of vision—the characters' perspective, which the camera takes, observation, and comic realism. This is important for my thesis when arguing that *Play Time* is a filmic document. In addition, Fischer discusses the differences between Francois, the main character in *Jour de Fete,* and M. Hulot.

Francois has bigger gestures and he uses more slapstick than M. Hulot, Fischer observes. The M. Hulot character is less hurried and, compared to Francois, the M. Hulot character becomes increasingly decentralised from the action of the films, to the point where in *Play Time* there are at least three faux M. Hulots who get mistaken for the "real" M. Hulot. This character plays an everyman character or role in *Play Time,* meaning Tati asks all the film viewers to join him, it is a way of connecting the film world to the real world outside the film. Tati was directly addressing all those who were living in the rapidly modernising Paris of the post-war period, and all those living in rapidly modernising cities around the world. Much of what Tati says about the modern city in *Play Time* still holds true today; in many cases, built environments are still being created that do not work well for the intended users.

In a response to Jonathan Rosenbaum's 1973 article "Tati's democracy: an interview and introduction", Fischer published an article in 1976 titled "Beyond freedom and dignity". She notes Rosenbaum's argument that *Play Time* is a good film to test Andre Bazin's ideas about language of cinema, especially regarding notions around the long shot, long takes, and deep focus. However, Fischer states that even though the film and essay have these elements in common, it is only a coincidence, and that while there is a lot happening in almost all the images of *Play Time*, allowing each viewer the room to take something individual away from the film, Fischer believes that Tati is far too controlling to suggest that *Play Time* is "Tati's Democracy" as Rosenbaum claims. She describes Tati as a "...marvellously benevolent despot" (Fischer, 1976, p. 239).

Bazin's, Thompson's and Fischer's work all contribute to the understanding of the filmic elements that Tati uses to tell his story in *Play Time*. Furthermore, Fischer has demonstrated that Tati is a social critic, and while the focus of her argument is leisure rather than architecture and space, her argument contributes to an understanding of *Play Time* as a filmic document, which can inform our understanding, experience and design of architecture and the city.

A more recent text is Stéphane Goudet's PhD thesis (2002), *La circulation des corps et des idees dans l'oeuvre de Jacques Tati: autour de "Play Time"*, yet to be translated. Goudet's thesis, in part at least, is about the movement of the body in modern space. Goudet has also made documentaries on Jacques Tati and co-curated the 2009 exhibition *Jacques Tati, in Double Quick Time* held at the Cinémathèque Française. The exhibition itself contributed to my thinking on Tati, especially in terms of the influences on his filmmaking. For example, it was the juxtaposition of a photograph of the garden at Villa Noailles by Robert Mallet-Stevens (1923-1927) with an installation referencing the garden in Tati's film *Mon Oncle* that first introduced the link between the work of Tati and Mallet-Stevens, which in turn indicates that Tati's knowledge of modern architecture informed his critique of its impact on the city and people's lives. Again, this connection confirms Tati's knowledge of modern architecture informing his critique of modern architecture and the city.

Film and architecture texts

A range of authors have explored Tati's oeuvre through the lenses of film and architecture. I will be dividing these texts into two periods. The first period, predominantly from the disciplines of architecture and French studies, is from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s. The second period is the body of literature on Tati which has appeared more recently. These texts differ from those of the first period in that while they also address spatial concerns regarding the modern city, they tend to emerge from the disciplines of cinema studies and cultural studies. Furthermore, some of these more recent texts present arguments contradictory to those found in the earlier ones, for example, that it is Tati who designs buildings which are dehumanising and not the modern architects (McLane, 2010). In most of the texts concerning film and architecture and Tati's work, the reverse is generally argued.

The majority of the film and architecture literature concerns Tati's films *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time*, with a greater focus on the second film. These texts address the modern city, modern life and, importantly for this thesis, the city of Paris. Most of these texts argue that the modern architecture in the Paris of *Play Time* constitutes an environment which dehumanises those who live there. The modern architecture is inhospitable, disorienting, it injures people, it offers little sensory input, its homogeneity dulls the spirit, it is an architecture which does not work well for either the human body or the mind. The authors argue that it fails to provide an experience which involves all five of the human senses that are critical for understanding our environment. The texts which focus on *Play Time* mostly follow the structure of the film in their analysis of it. They start with the problem, as Tati does in the first two thirds of the film. The texts then seek a resolution or suggestions for pathways to solve the problem, as Tati does in final third of the film. The various writers suggest that the solution to the problem of the inhumanity of modern architecture can be sought through play, by various means such as: reconnection of people (Marie, 2001), reordering of the inhuman modern architecture so that it becomes humanised (Hilliker, 1998); adaptation of people to modern architecture (Ockman, 2000), and conversion of modern architecture from the inhuman to the human (McCann, 2008). These means are activated by a change to—or even the destruction of—modern architecture. Other themes addressed in the literature on Tati and his work include "cynical modernity" (AlSayyad, 2006); lost identity (Hilliker, 2002); a revision of architecture, for architects (Penz, 1997); Tati himself as a poor designer (McLane, 2010); and modernity as a current project (Hainge, 2014). Hainge addresses urban modernity as a contemporary subject of study, rather than an historical one.

In his essay "Playtime: Tativille and Paris"[14], Iain Borden argues that in fact Tati was not against modern architecture (Borden, 2002). Borden's optimistic evaluation of the modern architecture in *Play Time* and what meaning the film's use of it conveys, in contrast to many other theorists, is that modern architecture can provide through play, chances of

[14] The essay is a development of Borden's argument in an earlier journal article titled "Material sounds: Jacques Tati and modern architecture" (2000).

joy in life and possibilities to encounter the unknown, in a positive way. This is an optimistic view. Film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum, in *The Criterion Collection* DVD notes (2006), is one of the few writers who agrees with Borden on this point. While other authors argue that it is through play that modern architecture becomes humanised, they also argue that it is only through the destruction of modern architecture that people can benefit both physically and psychologically. Borden suggests that the modern architecture in *Play Time* can remain unchanged and still be a setting for moments of joy and new possibilities. The majority of the other literature on Tati addresses the idea that the modern architecture in *Play Time* is dehumanising to the point of being unliveable.

Borden's work is important to the Tati scholarship because it enables an exploration of the complex ideas and feelings being conveyed in the film. I argue that the complexity in *Play Time* involves ideas of the promise of a bright, yet unknown, future, while at the same time acknowledging the overwhelming grief over what has been lost—the loss of 19th century Paris and the way of life it supported. *Play Time* is as bleak as it is joyful. Borden's work on Tati is also important as it highlights the complexity of Tati's critique of modern architecture. He argues that Tati was not simply saying to architects "this does not work". Tati embeds architecture in a "whole of life process". It is not presented as separate from, but as a part of life—and this is important both for architects and users.

French studies scholar Steven Spalding, in his article "Rediscovering the human in the urban dystopia: Mobility as detournement in Playtime", describes Tati as an urban thinker (2018, 303), as does this thesis. Spalding argues, similarly to Borden, that the modern city in *Play Time* is a place where you can find joy and freedom, rather than an environment that is "merely one of domination and control" (2018, p. 311). He uses the work of the Situationists, as does Laurent Marie, to build his argument. Spalding argues that M. Hulot's movement through the modern city is transformational, bringing joy and freedom. He argues that the way one moves through a city provides the possibility for reimagining the cityscape (2018, p. 300). However, he also argues that M. Hulot's movements influence the camera movements, but a fictional character does not create or set out camera placement and movement. This is done by real-life filmmakers. Nevertheless, this is an interesting

statement to make because it points towards the magic that Andre Bazin argues is within the M. Hulot character. Bazin states of the film *Mr Hulot's Holiday* (the M. Hulot character's first appearance) that M. Hulot appears and disappears each summer. Spalding seems to argue that M. Hulot, with a magical force, creates the camera movements. This sort of magic is a part of storytelling and the exchange of ideas.

Laurent Marie also address the complexity found in Tati's work, and argues in his essay "Jacques Tati's *Play Time* as New Babylon" that rather than being hostile to modernity and modernism, Tati is in some ways a modern himself, especially with regard to filmmaking technologies (2001, p. 259), as discussed in the introduction. Marie writes that Tati was at the forefront of evolving technologies in the cinema. One of the examples Marie gives is Tati's use of colour for the 1949 film *Jour de Fete* (Marie, 2001, p. 259)[15]. He was also one of the first to use video tape in his work. While criticising modern architecture and the city, Tati was not looking backwards but forwards; Marie suggests that Tati was looking for solutions within the context he was given.

Marie compares the Situationists' (1957-1972) *New Babylon Project* with *Play Time* to explore his argument. The *New Babylon Project* is about the inclusion of city dwellers, and the spatial combination of work, play, and life—in the one place. New Babylon is a notional city that encourages people to come together, rather than keeping them apart. Marie argues that in the first two thirds of *Play Time* the modern city actively keeps people apart. However, the destruction of the modern architecture at the newly opened Royal Garden nightclub enables people to reconnect with each other, creating a space that becomes social (Marie, 2001, p. 262-263). The architecture can no longer dictate people's behaviour.

Another argument that appears in the Tati literature for the solution of the inhuman environment created by the modern architecture in *Play Time* is reordering through play. Lee Hilliker argues that Tati and his character of M. Hulot take inhuman modern technology, including architecture, and reorder it, making it human. In his essay "Hulot vs. the 1950s:

[15] An innovative new French film colour process was used to record *Jour de Fete*, however due to technical difficulties the film was released in black and white. Many years later a colour version of the film was released.

Tati, technology and mediation", he suggests that modern technology is viewed in the film as something which restricts and dictates people's behaviour—creating mechanised people, who are alienated from one another. However, through play M. Hulot disrupts this tyranny of modern architecture and the urban environment it creates and shows other ways that people can interact with their environments and each other (Hilliker, 1998 p. 14). Although not overly detailed, Hilliker's discussion of mechanised and dehumanised people provides a starting point which this thesis will explore in greater detail.

In *Play Time*, Tati shows that modern, geometric, rationalised architecture has a negative impact on the human body; however, this spatially restrictive architecture can be converted, argues Ben McCann, in his chapter "'Du verre, rien que du verre': Negotiating Utopia in Playtime" (McCann, 2008). [16] McCann also addresses, as other writers do, the human bodily experience in relation to the modern architecture in *Play Time*. He suggests that the inhuman architecture, through play, is converted and becomes humanised. This article, in its extended discussion of Le Corbusier's influence on Paris, provides information which contributes to my examination of Le Corbusier's influence on the design of the set of Tativille in this thesis. [17] McCann uses the idea of utopia/dystopia to explore his argument, and while this perspective is relevant to *Play Time*—as the Paris in *Play Time* could be read as a dystopian future city—the utopian/dystopian theme is not central to this thesis. It argues that *Play Time*, simply, offers more hope than is typical of the dystopian film genre. While McCann argues that it is through a conversion of modern architecture that a human environment is created, Joan Ockman, in her essay "Architecture in a mode of distraction: eight takes on Jacques Tati's Playtime", claims it is through adaptation that humans survive the dehumanised environment created by modern architecture.

Her central claim is that people will adapt to modern architecture. The Royal Garden nightclub scene, the third and final section of *Play Time* where M. Hulot attends the increasingly chaotic opening night of the nightclub with much eating, drinking and dancing, and meets up with the American tourists, may be understood as a banquet. Ockman uses

[16] "Glass, nothing but glass."

[17] Tativille is the name given to the set in *Play Time*, which represents modern Paris.

Russian cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's work on Rabelais to argue that, "…the banquet's function is always to move things 'toward a better future that changes and renews everything in its path…'" (Ockman, 2000, p. 191). The discussion around the banquet is important for my research in terms of the body and the senses because it is through the body and senses that we connect to our surroundings, whether natural or built environments. She writes that what makes this adaptation possible is that the body is a constant, even though the environment changes around it.

In Paris, at least, in the post-World War II period the attitude towards modernity, and especially modern design, changes from something positive to something negative, which Nezar AlSayyad terms "cynical modernity" (2006, p. 97). In his chapter "Cynical modernity, or the modernity of cynicism" AlSayyad discusses the resistance in 1950s and 1960s Paris towards the rapid change that was bought by modernisation, and in the case of Paris itself, modern urbanisation. He describes the context in which *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* were made. While AlSayyad's argument that architecture and urbanism shapes our lives and how we move within the spaces of modernity is convincing, elements of this chapter are problematic. In suggesting that this modern environment is cynical, AlSayyad also appears to be suggesting that Tati is similarly cynical. I believe this is a misunderstanding of Tati's views as evidenced in his films, for example in *Mon Oncle*, the film does not end in despair, but with dance onto a very modern machine—the aeroplane. AlSayyad's chapter also points towards the complexity in Tati's work noted earlier; while, for example, *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* express despair for what has been lost they simultaneously look forward with a joyful hope.

Individual identity is another theme addressed in the literature on Tati that deals with architecture and the city. Lee Hilliker's argument in his essay "In the modernist mirror: Jacques Tati and the Parisian landscape", suggests that everything is changing so fast for M. Hulot that his perception of who he is has become difficult for him to "grasp" (Hilliker, 2002). This argument around identity and perception in relation to our surroundings is useful for my research as many parts of Paris in this period were continually being torn down and

reconstructed—this is reflected in *Play Time* in the total demolition of 19th century Paris. The construction of individual identity by the built environment is at the heart of *Play Time*.

Hilliker's discussion of Le Corbusier's work, although brief, addresses the investigation that this research undertakes. Hilliker begins with a comparison between *Play Time* and urban design ideas found in *The Athens Charter*—on which Le Corbusier had great influence—regarding the city in terms of leisure, work, home and circulation (Hilliker, 2002, p. 318). In *Play Time* the office district is at least a bus ride from the residential district and is similarly separated from the leisure district. At the end of the business day, the film viewer sees M. Hulot with many others boarding a bus in the office district, which he alights from in the residential district, where he bumps into an old army friend and is invited inside the apartment. M. Hulot leaves the apartment, and we see him next in another area of the city, in the leisure district where the Royal Garden nightclub is located.

Architectural scholar Guen-Jong Moon argues, in "Inhuman characteristics of modern architecture represented in Jacques Tati's films", that in *Play Time* and *Mon Oncle* Tati condemns the homogeneity of modern architecture, and criticises its sterile inhumanness (2017). Moon highlights aspects of modernisation found in Tati's films and states that the director is criticising the pursuit of technology when it is not necessarily providing an advantage, and that Tati shows rejection of glass as a building material, because it prevents traditional human interaction. This relates to Laurent Marie's argument that the city actively keeps people apart (2001). Moon puts forward that Tati's films have archived the public subconscious regarding the relationship to architecture and urbanism (2017). The massive urban works in Paris and the modernisation of France affected people's lives in the post-war period and this is reflected in Tati's films. This thesis argues that Tati's film works are documents which inform our understanding of the city.

Graham Cairns, in his chapter "Playtime: A commentary on the art of the Situationists, the philosophy of Henri Lefebvre and the architecture of the Modern Movement Playtime, 1967", argues that unlike other film sets the set in *Play Time* also functions as real architectural space designed by filmmakers, that is, by non-architects. One drawback of the argument is that while the ideas for the set design may have come from the

filmmakers the buildings that make up the *Play Time* set were actually designed by the architect Eugene Roman. However, he does raise some interesting points about the cleanliness of the city and the inhumanity of the modern city; he notes that the modern Paris of *Play Time* "… is so clean and pure…" that the set is "comically aseptic" (Cairns, 2012, p. 102-103). Cairns also states that the city "seemingly keeps itself clean" (2012, p. 102-10). I am in agreement that it is as if the city in *Play Time* is perpetually self-cleansing, the cleaner seen twice near the beginning of the film sweeps the floor but finds nothing to fill his dustpan.

That Tati filmically explores an "architectural vision" in *Play Time* (Penz, 1997, p. 68) is explained by Francois Penz in his essay "Architecture in the films of Jacques Tati". Penz argues that Tati reflects the architects' vision back to them, pointing out to architects the mistakes of modern architecture. It is interesting to note that Penz himself is an architect. This is a small point, but it is an important contribution to Tati scholarship and this thesis because it again addresses the complexity of Tati's work. Tati was not only using film to entertain but also as polemical document—a film-argument. The film engages architects, asking them to consider how their work affects the people who live with it.

As much of the Tati literature does, the essay "Recycling junkspace: finding space for 'Playtime' in the city" by Hillary Powell also investigates the strategy of play to humanise modern space—which, when first encountered, brings about a dysfunctional spatial experience for the user. Powell uses Rem Koolhaas's essay "Junk Space", based on Marc Auge's book *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,* to study *Play Time.* Powell investigates spatial modernity and its connection with ideas regarding a "dominant ideology"—in this case ideology of capitalist patriarchy—a topic which Robin Wood examines in his essay "An introduction to the America horror film", which I will address later in this thesis.

Recent film and architecture literature on Tati differs in at least two ways from these earlier works. Firstly, some texts are from the cinema studies and cultural studies disciplines, as opposed to the architecture and French studies disciplines of the previous period; and

secondly as noted above, some texts take on critically opposed positions to those found in the earlier period. More recent film and architecture texts on Tati, from cinema and cultural studies, address spatial concerns, especially modern space—the space created by modern architecture and urbanism, which is inseparable from the modernity that is experienced by those who live within it—in the post-World War II period.

Yelena McLane's position contradicts that of the earlier period of film and architecture Tati literature. She argues that it is Tati himself who is the poor designer; it is Tati who creates dysfunctional modern environments. McLane suggests that this is because Tati has not understood modern design. While Tati may not have understood modern architecture as an architect would, he understood it as a user, otherwise his films would not appeal to so many people, to other users. McLane's argument is perhaps faulty in places—because Tati and his collaborators were designing spaces and objects for the settings in the films. These sets were to critique modern design (outside of the film) in terms of its general dysfunction. No users were actually intended to occupy the sets as their dwellings, places of play and places of work. The sets were intended to be used by actors, who play acted at dwelling, playing and working within the modern sets that Tati and his team designed.

Art historian Christopher Heathcote takes a contrary view to the majority of earlier film and architecture Tati literature, arguing that, for Tati, the architecture in his films is not menacing but boring. Heathcote appears to have misunderstood the work of Tati. The earlier literature claims that the Paris in *Play Time* is a dehumanising and even harmful environment—take M. Giffard's broken nose, for example, the result of him walking into the "invisible" glass architecture. The boredom associated with the homogenised architecture in Tati's films is one of the key elements which make it menacing. The modern architecture creates sense deprivation, creating an environment something akin to a prison, such as the cell-like cubicles that appear in the office scene. It deprives people of the things which make them human. In Heathcote's essay "Jacques Tati in the ultra-modern house", he states "In Tati's view the modern city is not a menace. It is over ordered, and therefore boring" (Heathcote, 2014 p. 87). This is possibly a direct response to the French Pavilion at the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale, titled "Modernity*, Promise or Menace*?", although Heathcote

does not mention the pavilion in his essay. This pavilion, curated by architectural scholar Jean-Louis Cohen, was divided into four sections, one of which was dedicated to Jacques Tati. However, Heathcote's essay does offer an interesting discussion regarding the exhibitions on domestic hygiene held in Paris during the 1950s and Le Corbusier's influence on Tati's work.

The modern architecture and urbanism developed in France has had a global influence, which is one of the reasons why *Play Time* has an audience outside of France, explains Colin Martin in his article "Villa Arpel in MON ONCLE: Venice Architecture Biennale" (2014, p. 138). Martin's text is a review of the French Pavilion at the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale. He argues that the modern architecture depicted in *Mon Oncle* does not function effectively for the people who use it (Martin, 2014, p. 138). He notes that in France there was a general resistance to modern architecturally designed houses and it was only a few wealthy private citizens who lived in houses designed by modern architects (Martin, 2014, p. 138). He states, however, that the town planners did take to the idea of modern tower housing (2014, p. 138). This article is important because it highlights urban modernity as a current question for contemporary architects and urban planners, and draws attention to how modern architecture and urbanism were experienced by the people of Paris at the time.

Another writer who addresses modernity as a current project is cultural studies scholar Greg Hainge. In his essay "Three non-places of super modernity in the history of French cinema: 1967, 1985, 2000 – Playtime, Subway and Stand-By", Hainge argues that these three cinematic representations of Paris present changes in the protagonists' relationship to modern space. The nature of the space does not change in these representations from modern to postmodern or super modern, Hainge argues they are all modern space, the qualifiers are redundant. The space is "already super modern or, perhaps, always simply modern" (Hainge, 2014, p. 235). Hainge is arguing that all three films fall in the modern period. This is important for my thesis because it treats urban modernity as a current project.

Modern architecture creates environments which do not perform well for the individuals that use them in the films *Play Time* and *A Space Odyssey* (1968), argues English and cinema studies scholar, Brian Gibson, in his essay "Seeing-eye gods: CCTV and surveillance in Tati's and Kubrick's 1960s space odysseys". Both films use the idea of a screened environment, the characters within the film are depicted as being watched within the film. Two examples of this in *Play Time* are the box-like office cubicles that can be viewed from above and the apartment windows that let everyone on the street see in. In Kubrick's *A Space Odyssey* it is the constant surveillance of the people, by the CCTV computer camera, which plays a role in creating the inhuman environment. Gibson suggests that both directors, while being aware of their own screen medium, are asking us to leave the cinema and engage with "nature" (Gibson, 2013, p. 49), with life. Gibson's essay is useful for this thesis because of its discussion regarding modern space and the negative experiences people have with it. Gibson notes that the medium of film itself can be part of the problem, however, he argues that both of these filmmakers knowingly use the medium of film, which is a tool of surveillance, to critique the surveillance of the inhabitants of modern environments.

The majority of the film and architecture literature on Tati discusses the depiction of the modern city of Paris in *Play Time* and, to a degree, the modern environments in *Mon Oncle,* in terms of how modern design has created dehumanising environments. In order to further understand the work of Jacques Tati, in terms of modern architecture and urbanism, I will explore the role the abject plays in the separation of nature and the human body in the modern city of Paris as depicted in *Play Time* and how, in turn, this leads to a form of social, and hence political, control. This will be exploration begins in chapter one where the theoretical framework for the thesis is set out. The work of Julia Kristeva, Mary Douglas and Robin Wood, through the concepts of the abject, dirt and control, are used to examine the underlining causes of the dehumanising environment explored in majority of the Tati literature on *Play Time*. The following section, after the literature review conclusion, sets out the methodology for this thesis.

Conclusion

From this review of the relevant literature, I have developed my position that in *Play Time* the ultra-hygienic, highly ordered modern city of Paris is thoroughly controlled and so controlling of its citizens. The design of modern Paris has impacted significantly on the people of the city—they have been desensitised, disoriented, injured and finally turned into automata, rendering them lifeless. In the two great waves of the modernisation of Paris, nature came to be read as abject, effecting the separation of nature and the city—nature and the human body. The abjection with which nature has become imbued under the modernisation of Paris has led to a purposeful removal of nature from the city. The city is now ultra-clean and ordered, as are its citizens. In the film the lively but congested—and relatively still somewhat foul smelling—streets that characterised Haussmann's Paris have disappeared completely and in their place we see the ultra-clean modern streets.

Play Time argues that modern Paris is an environment which dehumanised its citizens. The sensory engagement with the whole of life experience in the city of Paris prior to World War II is no longer possible in the ultra-hygienic modern city. The Paris of Tati's childhood and youth has vanished—the iconic historical monuments have been transformed into reflected images. Paris as the exemplary modern city is no longer material, it can no longer be experienced with the messiness and exhilaration of all the human senses.

Tati's film *Play Time* documents his experience of and response to the massive urban modernisation of Paris that took place in the post-war period. It provides invaluable lessons about being in the world wholly with our rational selves, our imaginations, our emotions and our bodies. If we take the complexity of the human being into consideration when designing our cities and their architecture, we may create environments that work for, rather than against, the human being. This filmic document enables further understanding of how we plan, design and live in our cities today.

Methodology

The object of this multi-disciplinary study is Jacques Tati's 1967 feature film *Play Time,* specifically the interrelationships between the film, the city of Paris, and the director. This thesis argues that the abjectification of nature in Tati's Paris depicted in *Play Time* creates a controlling environment for its modern citizens, furthermore, it argues that *Play Time* is a filmic document that can be used to understand the city.

A close film analysis of *Play Time* was undertaken as this approach enables a detailed exploration of the audio-visual elements of the film, including the mise en scene—set design, camera angles, figure movement, costumes and so forth. The close film analysis was combined with a thematic analysis to develop the thesis argument. *Play Time* was chosen as the object of study because few, if any other, film directors' oeuvres have addressed the experience of the modernisation of Paris and France, in the post-World War II period, with such consistency and in such detail, meaning this film is a cinematic documentation of this period of modernisation in Paris and France. The film provides an insight into this experience, this was a time when many aspects of life were changing significantly including work, leisure, and hygiene, and the built environment of the city.

Tati spent his youth and early adult hood on Haussmann's boulevards (Bellos, 1999), the loss of which he laments in *Play Time*, evidenced by the traditional city's absence in the film An analysis of the biographical detail of Tati's life indicates Tati's artistic motivation in making the film. Tati also had many connections with modern architects and their ideas– which plays a role in shaping the form and content of the film. In his role as storyteller, Tati's film works can be read as documents of his experience of the post-war modernisation of France. These relationships between the *Play Time*, the city and Jacques Tati mean that the film is a document that can be used by those who were experiencing this rapid urban modernisation in the post-war period to understand their changing urban experience, and importantly it also provides an understand the city for us today.

Other film works made in Paris, contemporary with *Play Time,* , include Jean-Luc Godard's *2 or 3 Things I know about her* (1967), *Chronicle of a summer* by Edgar Morin and

Jean Rouch (1960), and *Love exists* (1960) by Maurice Pialat also comment on modern life in post-war Paris. These films, have a similarity to *Play Time, and* they also make a contribution to our understanding of the city, they do this by showing the effects of the modernising city on the lives of the people, with regard to isolation, pressures of consumerism and the increasing distance between the city of Paris and its growing suburbs, , for example. Tati's film *Play Time* addresses many of the topics explored in these three films in various ways, Tati, however, more explicitly investigates modern architecture and how people live within it. The analysis of these films enables a deeper understanding of the context in which *Play Time* was made and so the film itself.

A theory analysis of Julia Kristeva's writing on abjection, the anthropologist Mary Douglas's work on pollution rituals, and film scholar Robin Wood's theory on the American horror film, was undertaken. These three authors are writing in varying disciplines—Kristeva writes from the disciplines of Psychoanalysis and Literary Theory, Douglas from Anthropology, and Wood from the discipline of Film Scholarship—however in concert, and especially where their work overlaps, these works provide the conceptual framework that was used in this thesis to analyse *Play Time.* The way these works overlap include Douglas's work on dirt (including elements of hygiene) addressing social control, Kristeva's work on the abject, addressing in some respects, social and political control, and Wood's work on the horror film and monsters addressing social and political control. By using this conceptual framework as a means of analysis, we can better understand how the abjectification of nature was created in the modern city and how this abjectification creates the city's controlling aspects, which are embedded within Paris' modern architecture, as depicted in *Play Time*. Robin Wood's theory of the monster in the horror film genre also provides a model which, illustrates how the control of this oppressive city is overturned.

The literature on film and architecture also provides instruments for analysing thematic aspects of *Play Time*, such as architecture, modernity, and how film and architecture interact to create meaning and knowledge. An analysis of this literature further illustrates how film can be used to understand the city. A multi-disciplined approached using film and architecture enables an exploration of the complexities of the human being, for

example the relationships between the rational and the emotional. Furthermore, fiction allows us to engage with elements of the human experience beyond details kept in an archive (Harvey, 2005), for example. Moreover, the medium of film can show us something of the physical bodily experience of the city, most fiction films are spatial in their representation, these films can represent the city in what is possibly the closest medium to what one may see and hear if they were there. Film can convey something of the experience we have when, we are in and move through our buildings and cities.

An analysis of texts on the urban and architectural history of Paris from the early 1800s until the 1960s was undertaken to provide a context for the film. When *Play Time* was made, in the mid-1960s, Paris was experiencing its second period of rapid urban modernisation. The first wave of urban modernisation was during the mid-19th century under Haussmann. A specific focus on the urban hygiene project under Haussmann was undertaken because it illustrated the origins of the ultra-hygiene depicted in Tati's film. In Paris the urban hygiene movement began in the first half of the 19th century which was a catalyst for the renovation of the Paris sewers, a major element of the mid-19th century urban project. The urban hygiene movement is intertwined with personal hygiene and class. Hygiene also had a major influence on the modern architecture of the first half of the 20th century, which in seen in the post-World War II modern architecture, that is depicted in Play Time. The study of the vast urban modernisation project in Paris frames and places *Play Time* and contributes to explaining why Paris appears as it does in the film. These massive urban projects in the mid-19th century and in the post-World War II period had immense influence on architectural design and city planning around the world, making Paris a significant study for modern urbanism and architecture.

These methodological choices are important because the close film analysis, biographical analysis, and historical analysis, enabled an exploration of the interrelationships between the film, the physical fabric of the city and the intangible aspects of the experience of the city, and the influence this relationship has on people's lives. The theorical analysis and historical analysis undertaken illuminates the connections between urban hygiene, personal hygiene, the ultra-clean modern architecture, and social and political control of the

city experienced in modern Paris as depicted in *Play Time*. In the next chapter, an examination of themes of the clean and unclean, the abject, social control, political control and their interrelationship is undertaken.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ABJECT: DIRT, POWER AND CONTROL

The body must bear no trace of its debt to nature… (Kristeva, 1982, p. 102).

Introduction

According to philosopher Julia Kristeva, the abject, or that which is deemed to be abject, has changed throughout human history, but what is constant is the aspect of the boundary—a separation. In *Play Time* nature is separated from the city. This chapter argues that the abjectification of nature sustains this separation. It explores the psychological aspects of the abjectification of nature and how it is used to control the citizens of modern Paris.

The critical interrogation of the controlling devices seen in *Play Time* is conducted primarily through the work of three theorists, Julia Kristeva, Mary Douglas and Robin Wood. In Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* she explores the role of boundaries in the experience of the abject, and how the abject can be used politically to control a citizenry. The separation of the clean, machine-made modern city, and nature—considered unclean in the Paris of *Play Time* becomes abject and—is used to control the inhabitants. This controlling device works because being associated with that which is besmirched is undesirable as this association can lead to social death, meaning the individual is cast out from society. The abject concerns meaning and belonging. Therefore, what is considered to be abject can be used socially and hence politically to control the entire population of modern Paris, in *Play Time*. Anthropologist Mary Douglas's argument concerning hygiene, cleansing rituals, and social order, set out in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* is used in this critical interrogation to illustrate the social control experienced by the characters, and witnessed by the film viewer throughout *Play Time*, concerning the pure and impure, clean and unclean and the transgression of boundaries. Film scholar Robin Wood's argument in the essay "An introduction to the American horror film" is used here to demonstrate the controlling ideology, embedded within the modern corporate architecture, dominating the society of modern Paris in *Play Time*. Wood contends that the American horror film is a cathartic experience for anyone living within a dominant ideology—a capitalist patriarchy, for

example. Often in the horror film, the main characters stand outside the "norm", as is the case in *Play Time.* M. Hulot, the American tourists, and the working class are outsiders in modern Paris—only the bourgeoisie, representing the "ideal citizen", belong in the modern city.

The architecture of modern Paris in *Play Time* creates the "good" citizen. This urban environment, formed by the architecture, serves to create the ideal modern bourgeois citizen. The ideal citizen is "an automaton" (Wood, 1979, p. 8). In modern Paris, as it appears in *Play Time*, keeping the body clean and well ordered—to fall in line with the clean and well-ordered city—is crucial to remaining in this ultra-hygienic urban environment. Nature has become abject and so expelled from the city. The evidence for the almost complete absence of nature is the essential and pristine cleanliness of the modern city. There is no dust, little soil, and limited plant and animal life in modern Paris. The minimal signs of nature that are present in the city, such as the people, are restrained by the dominant ideology embedded within the architecture. The political and social control is embedded in the hygienic modern architecture.

Social control: The clean and unclean

Anthropologist Mary Douglas employs the binary oppositions of the clean and unclean, the pure and impure to craft her argument in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.* She argues that while hygiene and health do play a role in pollution rituals—cleansing rituals that are usually performed in a religious context—this activity is not fundamentally about cleansing, but about creating order. She explains, "Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment" (2002, p. 2). The separation of clean and unclean also creates boundaries outlining acceptable social behaviours within any given social group. The boundaries establish points of transgression. Furthermore, Douglas argues that what is considered to be dirt is arbitrary and it changes through time, "There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder" (Douglas, 2002, p. 2). The arbitrary nature of what dirt is, while contributing to the creation of social order, provides a controlling device within a given society.

Douglas maintains that "primitive"[18] religious pollution rituals create symbolic patterns which in turn create and underpin a social system, a social order (Douglas, 2002). The symbolic patterns, established in the cleansing rituals, connect different kinds of experiences together, giving them, and therefore life, meaning (Douglas, 2002, p. 3). Importantly she explains that by studying "primitive" cultures we understand more about our own (Douglas, 2002, p. 6). Pollution rituals and the symbolic patterns they make work to create order on two levels, reasons Douglas: firstly, on an instrumental level, by influencing people's behaviour to enforce the status quo, and secondly, on an expressive level. She writes, "... some pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order" (Douglas, 2002, p. 3). What a society associates with elements such as specific bodily fluids can be used in the creation of a social order—establishing "hierarchy or symmetry" (Douglas, 2006, p. 4) between people within a society. Symbolic associations with particular bodily fluids have been used negatively, to disempower members of a society and empower others. Menstrual blood, for example, can be used to express "a general view of the social order" that women are inferior to men. Menstrual blood has often been viewed negatively so that those associated with it, women, are also viewed negatively; thus, women are disempowered while men are empowered, perpetuating hierarchy within a society. In this instance, men are empowered because menstruating women are considered dirty, which means they are considered as lesser beings, in other words abject. By symmetry Douglas means holding an equal place with people in a hierarchical system, in this example, men hold an equal place with each other, comparatively speaking, in relation to women.

In *Play Time* Douglas's "instrumental level", that is, society influencing behaviour, is reflected throughout the film in the representation of the bourgeoisie—the clean, well-ordered, predictable and thoroughly homogenised modern citizens. The citizens influence one another, which is seen in appearances and behaviour, for example, their clean and neatly pressed clothing, their movement through space—many modern citizens exhibit a

[18] Douglas acknowledges that in the English-speaking schools of anthropology some find the word "primitive" problematic, while the continental schools do not consider the same word problematic. Douglas finds the word primitive useful to distinguish between modern and non-modern peoples—as long as the term is not used to imply that modern peoples are superior to primitive peoples (Douglas, 2006, p. 115-116). For Douglas, the terms primitive and modern do not depict different time periods but the different ways in which people live.

similar gait and undertake their activities in similar ways. The bourgeoisie does not, for example, hang half out of a moving vehicle while shouting across the street, as M. Hulot's working class old army friend does to catch his attention, an event which happens during the sequence in the business district.

Pollution rituals create order in a society controlling people's behaviour. Abiding by the established cleansing rituals means one belongs to the group approved by society. In *Play Time* there is no evidence of any bodily fluids, or their associated activities such as defecation and the cleansing of the body, necessary for the health, even life, of the human body to continue. It is this complete absence of bodily fluids and their associations which indicates that there is no place for the human body in the modern city; this absence will be discussed in Chapter Five. Douglas's "expressive level" can be seen in *Play Time* in the "general view", held by the bourgeoisie, that everything in the city, including its people, must remain at all times ultra-hygienic almost to the point of sterilisation—a state where no life exists. It is as if the whole city has been in a gigantic autoclave. The cold and lifeless metal of the surgical instruments remain in a pristine state—until they are used. The city is the oppressor. Modern Paris eliminates the fact that the daily activity of a city means it has to, in many respects, "get dirty". The city has to engage with the blood and guts of life in order for its citizens to live a fully sensual existence.

While the separation between the pure and impure, the clean and the unclean works to create a social order by setting out accepted behaviours, it also works to create boundaries. The transgression of a pollution boundary risks disrupting the social order—it is dangerous for society. Towards the end of the Royal Garden nightclub scene M. Hulot's actions, eventually, break down the established social order of the modern city and chaos ensues. The act of transgression is also dangerous for an individual—they risk being socially excluded from the group, if they should transgress the established boundaries. M. Hulot and his friends are notably different from the conforming bourgeoisie. Douglas states that,

> ... [I]deas about separating, purifying, demarcating, punishing transgressions have their main function to impose a system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only

> by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created (2002, p. 5).

Certain behaviours mean a citizen belongs: if the citizen behaves in the manner of the "ideal citizen", the individual may remain within the boundary of the social group. The individual will continue to belong to the social group associated with the dominant ideology—it is the dominant ideology embedded within the architecture that controls the modern city of Paris.

The threat of being socially ostracised is what keeps the social order, however, the transgression of boundaries, or the implied consequences of the transgression, can also be used politically. What remains unclear in Douglas's argument is whether she finds the keeping of a social order, and the political element entailed within this, as positive or negative. Kristeva on the other hand argues, and I am in agreement with her, that social order has and can be used politically in a negative manner to control society. This political oppression through social control is expressed throughout *Play Time*. Douglas's central concern is that pollution rituals are not about actual physical cleansing but are about how they bring order and meaning to a society (Douglas, 2002, p. 3 & Douglas, 2002, p. 196); her argument, unlike Kristeva's, is not directly related to power. Douglas does address this question, of the preservation of a social order containing a negative or positive element, but she does so at an oblique angle. She argues that when the patterns of a social order are disrupted, a new social order may be created (Douglas, 2002, p. 117). In *Play Time* during the nightclub scene, a portrayal of Douglas's explanation of the creation of a new social order is illustrated. The night club scene is discussed further in Chapter Six.

The disruption and reorganisation of a social pattern is clearly illustrated in the chaos of the Royal Garden nightclub scene in *Play Time.* This scene occurs in the third section of the film, in the leisure district. The nightclub is opening for the first time. The builder and architects are still running around as the first guests arrive. It is an exclusive bourgeois nightclub with dining and dancing. It is during this scene that new social patterns and new rules emerge. Here, the lifeless rigidity of the modern architecture breaks down as a result

of the gently anarchic behaviour of M. Hulot and his new friends; thus, a new social pattern emerges. The people start to move freely and have a more sensual engagement with themselves, each other and their environment. This Royal Garden nightclub scene is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

The work of Douglas informs Kristeva's theory of abjection, especially where she addresses the abject, the clean and unclean, and boundaries. Kristeva asserts that social control through boundary transgression can be used politically and usually has negative implications for individuals. I argue in this thesis that the abject in *Play Time* (or rather its absence), is used in a politically controlling manner—one that is negative for those who do not fit the social ideal. In the first two-thirds of the film the modern city dominates the people's behaviour, they are controlled, neat, and tidy—the modern citizens even move in a uniform way. Furthermore, as Laurent Marie observes, the people are distanced from one another (Marie, 2001), a distance created by the city itself—for example, during the office sequence M. Hulot and M. Giffard get lost in the glass reflections, preventing them from making contact.

At some points, both Douglas's and Kristeva's arguments are concerned with the clean and unclean, social order, and how meaning is created—or for Kristeva how the meaninglessness of life is realised. For Douglas, meaning is created through the ordering of things, the cleansing process creates patterns bringing disparate things together, giving them meaning. For Kristeva on the other hand, life is meaningless—this is the realisation, the horror with which one comes face to face within the void. Douglas and Kristeva's approaches are about belonging, for Douglas with the social group, and connecting, for Kristeva with the individual. Belonging and connecting are essential for our wellbeing. The importance of connecting with, or not connecting with, another an individual is discussed in detail in the following section in which Kristeva uses the example of the "borderline patient". The essential importance of belonging to a group and connecting with individuals is used in the creation and maintenance of social order and political control. Humans are social animals.

As Douglas is an anthropologist, her argument focuses on society, in particular how social order is established in a society. The social order impacts upon the individual, as individuals make up a society, but the individual is not the central focus for Douglas, whereas Kristeva's argument focuses on the individual (the subject). Specifically, her argument focuses on the individual's identity or lack of identity—the meaninglessness of life that the subject comes to realise when they find themselves in the void—a place without meaning, without identity, a place where they are unable to reconnect with another person (object), a place of alienation (Kristeva, 1982). Identity is related to the subject reconnecting with another subject—which Kristeva suggests is impossible. For Douglas meaning is created through cleansing rituals: if we adhere to them, we get to belong to a social group. Belonging is important for us all, which is why it can be used for social control.[19]

Social and political control: Abjection

For Kristeva, life is meaningless, which we realise if we find ourselves in the void. The role of the abject is to keep a person from the void. In *Play Time* nature is the source of abjection; an association with nature, the abject, means the modern citizen risks being separated from the group. Thus, abjectness of nature prevents a person from having to face the void—in the void one realises that reconnecting with another person (subject) is impossible. In the void, one realises that life is meaningless. This is how, in *Play Time* at least, the modern citizens are controlled. If the modern citizens hold to the social rules regarding cleanliness—in this case by denying any association with nature, the abject—they can belong to the dominant social group. Moreover, they can also hold on to the illusion that life has meaning.

In *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection*, Kristeva explains that the threat of the void provides the power for one person to manipulate another. The void is a place of meaninglessness—this is the horror, for any individual who finds themselves in the void. The abject is a device—within the workings of the threat of the void—that can be used as a mechanism for social and political control. In modern Paris nature has been deemed

[19] An example of the importance of belonging is found in the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Wife's Lament,* located within the Exeter Book of the 10th century; it is about the extreme suffering a woman experiences when she is exiled from her community, and has to live by herself outside the town.

abject—all nature is unclean, disgusting and to be rejected. The ultra-hygienic city and its architecture dictates the citizens' behaviour, by first controlling their minds.

The abject is embedded in the physical yet at the same time, in its final consequence, the abject appears to be wholly psychological. While it is concerned with ideas about physical substances, these ideas pass through the mental—rational and irrational—processes of the human mind. While the abject has a physicality relating to the body and its substances, the abject is most troubling psychologically—by its role in the subject's realisation that life is meaningless. The abject concerns the body—material substances, blood, urine, pus and so forth. It is something one turns away from in disgust. The abject or that which represents abjection is often a thing that was once inside the body, and is now outside of it, but the abject can also be things taken into the body, such as foods that are deemed to be unclean.

The abject is something that has transgressed a boundary. The creation of boundaries establishes types of behaviour that are prohibited or accepted by a particular society. The transgression of such boundaries is threatened with punishment. It is the threat of punishment, through social alienation, that establishes or dictates correct behaviour in a given social context. Kristeva uses the work of many anthropologists, including Mary Douglas, to show that dirt, in a religious context, becomes defilement and is used to demarcate prohibitions (1982, p. 77). As mentioned earlier, Douglas argues that cleansing rituals both give meaning to life, and create order for the individual and a society—a social order. An individual not adhering to these rituals—transgressing the boundary from the pristine to the spoilt, from the pure to the impure—has the potential of both creating meaninglessness for themselves, and also bringing about their alienation from the social group. It is the cleansing rituals, which establish the boundaries between things and types of behaviours, that are seen as either acceptable or unacceptable.

Boundaries concern space. For Kristeva, the abject is inherently spatial. Kristeva writes, "The one by whom the abject exists is thus a *deject* who places (himself), *separates* (himself), situates (himself), ..." (1982, p. 8). In the modern city of *Play Time* that which is

deemed to be abject, and those people associated with it, are separated out from the social group, physically placed beyond their city boundary. Kristeva continues, "Instead of sounding himself as to his 'being,' he does so concerning his place: '*Where* am I?' instead of '*Who* am I?'" (1982, p. 8, Kristeva's brackets and quote marks).

The citizen's psychological wellbeing, albeit a false one, is associated with the place they do and do not belong. In *Play Time,* nature has been expelled beyond the city limits of Paris. The expulsion of nature from the city is about controlling the population. The people of modern Paris must remain pristine. The thing that is thought of as dirty and abject, that is nature, has been placed outside, separated from, the modern city.

Dirt is that which is placed outside a boundary: a thing that has been excluded, Kristeva contends. Furthermore, she agrees with Douglas in arguing that what is considered to be dirt is, in fact, arbitrary.

> Taking a closer look at defilement, as Mary Douglas has done, one ascertains the following. In the first place, filth is not a quality in itself, but it applies only to what relates to a boundary and, more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, a margin (Kristeva, 1982, p. 69).

Almost anything can be deemed to be dirty. What is thought to be unclean in one society may not be considered so in another society. For example, in France for much of the 1950s daily bathing was not considered necessary for cleanliness (Zdatny, 2012). Whereas in other cultures and at other periods, to bathe daily has been considered a necessity for cleanliness and it is seen as unclean not to do so. The film viewer observes this in *Play Time* in the way that the citizens present themselves and their city—always "clean and tidy". In *Play Time* elements associated with the body, once acceptable in Paris, such as the smell of sweat, garlic on the breath, are in modern Paris found repugnant.

Deeming things to be soiled or unsoiled effects a separation. In these separations, boundaries and borders are demarcated, creating a danger or opportunity for transgression.

The boundary marks the separation between the unclean and clean. The abject or that which is represented of the abject is arbitrary—it is what a society believes that makes the substance either polluted or unpolluted. In deeming things to be soiled or unsoiled societies effect a separation—that is, a divide between clean/unclean, pure/impure, inside/outside, subject/object. In these separations, boundaries and borders are demarcated, creating the danger or opportunity for transgression. The boundary marks the separation between the unclean and clean, the mother and child, the object and subject—the unclean mother, the abject mother, the separation of the object and subject.

Separation, identity, the impossibility of reconnection and the meaninglessness of life

Kristeva uses psychoanalysis, specifically the work of Freud and Lacan, to build upon her argument regarding separation. She explains the separation of the child from the mother as the first separation we all experience. This separation raises questions concerning identity. At first, the infant child sees itself and the mother as one. In developing, the child (the subject) realises that it is a separate identity from the mother, the first object (Kristeva, 1982, p. 32). The child, the subject, is separated from the mother, the object, firstly at birth, physically separated and then as the subject starts to develop its own identity—when it realises it is a separate being from its mother—it experiences symbolic separation and is now separated once again.

Kristeva focuses on the "borderline patient" to help illustrate this idea of separation further. Borderline patients are in an "ambiguous position [between the] I/Other, Inside/Outside" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 7) making "…the conscious/unconscious irrelevant" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 7). This "ambiguous position" means that psychoanalysts have access to the unconscious mind through the borderline patient.

> The constituting barrier between subject and object has here become an insurmountable wall. An ego, wounded to the point of annulment, barricaded and untouchable, cowers somewhere, nowhere, at no other place than the one that cannot be found. Where objects are concerned he delegates phantoms, ghosts, "false cards"... (Kristeva, 1982, p. 47).

Kristeva uses the borderline patient to elaborate upon the idea of separation and suggests that everyone to some extent has the experiences of the borderline patient. In the borderline patient's case the separation from the mother is experienced as wounding rejection and brings the borderline patient to the realisation of the impossibility of them ever being able to reconnect with another object (person). This is the horror of the void that each one of us experiences, according to Kristeva. The wounding rejection and then not being able to reconnect drives much of our behaviour and makes the individual controllable.

In *Play Time*, Kristeva's concept of belonging and connecting is expressed through the clean and unclean signifiers illustrated throughout the film. The bourgeoisie are ultra-hygienic and belong in the ultra-hygienic modern city. In the case of modern Paris, all must behave and take on the appearance of the modern sterilised bourgeoisie in order to belong. M. Hulot is the exemplar of the outsider in modern Paris, he is constantly lost in the modern city and not only within the reflections in the modern glass architecture. At another point in the film M. Hulot walks to into a lift he believes to be a picture alcove and ends up on another floor of the building. He also unexpectedly ends up on a tour with a group of businessmen. He is always lost within the modern city—he does not belong there.

In the modern city depicted in *Play Time*, keeping clean means the individual belongs to the empowered class, the bourgeoisie. One's behaviour is expressed in adherence to a "moral hygiene", which will be discussed in Chapter Two in relation to the Haussmannisation of Paris in the mid-19th century. At this time the streets of Paris began a transition from being the fairground for the working classes—a place where the middle and upper classes rarely entered on foot (Jordan, 1995, p. 94)—to a place that came to be dominated by the bourgeoisie and their new lifestyle.

Abjection: The old and new testaments, & the death of God

In the pre-modern period, religion and pollution rituals extended to all areas of life, and religious and social rules were interwoven. In the modern period, with the "death of God", the social rules around pollution continue but under new illusions, those of "…politics or science—the religions of modern times" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 133-134). Cleansing rituals

change over time. These are human inventions, but in the pre-modern period, the rituals appear as if laid down by the gods.

Kristeva first uses the Old Testament to illustrate how the ideas of the unclean, the abject, can be used socially, therefore politically. In her work using the New Testament, she shows that abjection moves from something that is external to the body to an internalisation. This occurs, in a Christian context, through the confession of sins, which makes the abject into word, language, and sign. The abject is embodied through the spoken word of the confession. The confession is a form of social control by the church. The stated idea of the church is that in the confession of sins, individuals are forgiven by God through the priest. In the Old Testament, behaviours are dictated and controlled, in part at least, by prohibitions, what to eat and what not to eat, for example. In the New Testament, one is threatened by not having sins absolved by God, and so behaves. To have sins forgiven they had to be confessed, by the spoken word, to the priest. In the New Testament the body remains intact.

This intact body, and controlled body that appears in *Play Time,* and horror films such as the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1955, 1978) are similar to Kristeva's explanation of the internalisation of the abject through the Christian confession. Unlike in the Old Testament where material substances such as food or blood are used to mark where the befouled is, in the New Testament through the confession, ideas of prohibition are embedded within the spoken word, internalised in the body and controlling its behaviour. *Play Time,* set in the modern period, is an embodiment of the concept of the "death of God". In *Play Time* there are two references to the Judeo-Christian God, both of which are intended to provoke mirth, and imply his absence. The first is found at the beginning of the film. The starched headgear of the nuns' habits bounces up and down, to comic effect, as they walk. The nuns play an important role in letting the viewer initially think that the building in the opening sequence is a hospital, before it turns out to be an airport, communicating to the viewer that this entire city of modern Paris is a sterile environment. Furthermore, everything in the city gives the same sterile experience as a hospital. The second reference to God is later in the film, in the hotel lobby when the tourists are gathering to be collected for their evening out. Here,

when a priest walks under a neon sign, a part of it lights up as a halo above his head. Ridicule of this kind in previous generations in France under the Roman Catholic church would have risked the charge of blasphemy, which was punishable by law until the French Revolution of 1789. In the 1960s, although much further on from 1789, the Roman Catholic Church still had an influence on many people's lives, and this is why the jokes work.

The prohibition devices of the Old Testament, such as the food prohibitions, as well as the prohibition devices of the New Testament, such as the confession, contribute to belief in the idea that there is something bigger than ourselves protecting us from the void, a place of meaninglessness. The idea of God and the idea of the abject stand together before the void, according to Kristeva, so we do not have to face it. Religious rituals to do with cleansing, and the spoken confession, a kind of spiritual or mental cleansing, related to prohibitions and transgression, are essential in providing the meaning of life. An "invisible sword of a non-existent God" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 138) stands before the void, protecting the people from it. However, this changes in the modern period with the "death of God"—where the abject can also reveal the void.

Kristeva suggests that the abject in our experience or approach to it changes through time. In the pre-modern period people held illusions—religious beliefs—where a meaning for life was created, in part through cleansing rituals and confession. In the pre-modern period, before the "death of God", the idea of the abject was found, with God, before the void. The practice of pollution rituals and religious prohibitions gave life structure and meaning. In this way, one was not faced with the meaninglessness experienced in the void. However, in the modern period, after the "death of God", the abject reveals the void. In this period the illusion of God was replaced with new illusions such as politics and science (Kristeva, 1982, p. 133-134).

Modern politics and modern science play a role in establishing social rules. For science, one discipline in which this occurred was medicine, especially hygiene. Antiseptics and anaesthetics, for example, brought a new faith, rather than that of praying. Interestingly hospitals in the west have a long history with the Church. With the development of

capitalism in Europe, large sections of society, predominantly the middle classes, grew in size significantly. Capitalism is not perhaps so much directly about faith, but has, in the West at least, taken over from religion in creating meaning. Following its practices provides meaning, or at least, distracts one from the meaninglessness of life. Capitalism keeps those who conform to the rules in the established social order secure—it dictates the ways people behave. Capitalism controls our lives by making people want to consume, and behave in certain ways, which allows one to gain employment—the threat of unemployment helps to keep the populace conforming to the ideal citizen type; it discourages revolt. To belong to the middle classes, one requires constant employment that provides relatively high remuneration. The middle classes contain capitalism's ideal citizen.

Behaving in a certain way, as prescribed by the dominant ideology, also allows one to belong to a particular social group—in the case of *Play Time* this is the capitalist patriarchy. In *Play Time* the bourgeoisie personify the ideal citizen and are the only demographic that lives in modern Paris. The behaviour of the ideal citizen works to repress any surplus energy (Wood, 1979, p. 8) which may threaten the capitalist patriarchy, thus keeping the social order, a concept which is explored in the following section with Robin Wood's theoretical writing on the horror film. New faiths like science and capitalism replaced religion, but only partially; being left without God brings the possibility of facing the meaninglessness of the void.

Kristeva utilises the concept of the "death of God", as noted above, mostly through the work of the writer Celine, to show how the void is revealed. Kristeva uses the anti-Semitism of Celine, feelings that are demonstrated in the abominable thought (and so behaviour) depicted in his writing, as illustration of how the void is revealed. Literature, consisting of words, signs, and language, plays a significant role in Kristeva's understanding of abjection. According to Kristeva, Celine's abject, the abject within the writer himself, manifests in his novels and other texts. Celine's abject within these texts, in turn, reveals the void for Kristeva, where everything is meaningless, where there is no being, no identity, no possibility of connecting. Kristeva reasons that through works of literature we can access the abject, which reveals the void. Kristeva claims that literature brings understanding to how

we live.[20] It teaches us about the world, life and ourselves. This is something that the cinema no doubt can also provide. Kristeva states that the work in her book the *Power of Horrors: An essay on abject* is not merely an "intellectual exercise" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 209), but shows something of how we live.

The automaton, dominant ideology and the monster as disruptors of normality

Mary Douglas indicates that cleanliness is not so much about hygiene, but about the ordering of the environment and human behaviour (Douglas, 2002). Kristeva takes Douglas's idea regarding social ostracisation, resulting from the transgression of boundaries, and extends it to the political (Kristeva, 1982). Patriarchal capitalism, the dominant ideology in Robin Wood's essay "An introduction to the American horror film", creates the ideal citizen, the automaton, and through this creation controls society at large (Wood, 1979).[21] *Play Time,* like films found within the horror film genre, employs ideas regarding order and the potential threat or realised disorder caused by blood, excrement, and other bodily fluids transgressing the boundary of the body.

Wood argues in his essay that the dominant ideology aims to make the "good" citizen into an automaton (1979, p. 8). The means and rules set by the dominant ideology are embodied within the citizen. Wood maintains that the horror film genre employs ideas that social, hence political, control is established through the ideal citizen. The ideal citizen *is* an automaton. Wood argues:

> The 'ideal' inhabitant of our culture is the individual whose sexuality is sufficiently fulfilled by the monogamous heterosexual union necessary for the reproduction of future ideal inhabitants... The ideal, in other words, is as close as possible to an automaton in whom both sexual and intellectual energy has been reduced to a minimum (Wood, 1979, p. 8).

[20] "By suggesting that literature is its privileged signifier, I wish to point out that, far from being a minor, marginal activity in our culture, as a general consensus seems to have it, this kind of literature, or even literature as such, represents the ultimate coding of our crises ..." (Kristeva, 1982, p. 208).

[21] While Wood is writing about America in his essay, as America is a capitalist patriarchy that has been central to the development of western culture in the 20th century, Wood's theory can also be used to inform *Play Time,* set in France in the 1960s, and our reading of *Play Time* in the 21st century.

In *Play Time* we see automaton-like figures throughout the film. The majority of the citizens in modern Paris give the impression they are machines, bloodless creatures, not dissimilar to the fembots in Bryan Forbes' *The Stepford Wives* (1975). The citizens of modern Paris move stiffly. They do not move naturally or with an organic flow. The modern citizens behave as the architecture dictates—the dominant ideology is embedded within the modern architecture and consequently embodied within the modern Parisian bodies.

In the modern city of *Play Time,* the need for people's sensual organic engagement with their environment is not available. In this city, the natural—plants and animals—is removed or reduced to a bare minimum. Even the natural associated with the body, the blood and guts and the things the body expels—things that transgress the boundary of the body, potentially creating disorder—are also seemingly absent from the modern city. These ideas will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

According to Wood, the American horror film is significant as a cultural practice, in terms of the role it plays in subverting the dominant ideology and exposing its operations. Wood writes that, "From Marx we derive our awareness of a dominant ideology … as an insidious, all pervasive force capable of concealment behind the most protean disguises…" (Wood, 1979, p. 7). Wood notes that it is through the ideas of Marx that we gain an understanding of the dominant ideology and how it works. The dominant ideology of which he writes is that found in America, patriarchal capitalism, and the rest of the Western world.

Wood explains the influence of Marx and Freud on the social and sexual revolutions, respectively, that took place in the West, mainly in the post-World War II period. It is Freud's psychoanalytic theory that offered a method of investigating how the dominant ideology is transmitted and enforced. The means of this transmission and enforcement is the patriarchal nuclear family (Wood, 1979, p. 7), as depicted in *Play Time* in the apartment scene. Wood states that it is the work of feminist and gay liberation theorists, using psychoanalytic theory, that uncovered the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism.

Wood maintains that these theorists established, "...their process towards a common aim, the overthrow of the patriarchal capitalist ideology and the structure and institutions that sustain it and are sustained by it" (1979, p. 7). As Wood explains, the horror film provides a vehicle to gain further understanding of the workings of the dominant ideology and therefore how to gain liberation from the oppression it uses to enforce its position.

In *Play Time* the "all pervasive force" of the dominant ideology, patriarchal capitalism, is "concealed, and disguised" in the very fabric of the built environment itself, within the ideas embedded within the modern architecture. A strong force is felt, controlling the citizenry, yet it remains unseen, a "hidden hand" (Harvey, 1996, p. 125)—a low atmospheric pressure pervades modern Paris, yet in contrast the skies remain brightly blue, accompanying the modern citizens' delusion in regard to their oppression, while contributing to the disturbing feeling of the inhuman environment the film conveys to the viewer. The results of the unseen controlling forces are evident in the way the citizenry moves around the modern city—in a robotic, apparently mindless fashion—following rectilinear pathways, created by the city and its modern architecture. Almost all the citizens of Paris move in an orderly way around the city; all apart from M. Giffard, who is singled out in the film as a "key character". It is he who M. Hulot has come to Paris to meet on a matter of business, the nature of which the viewer never discovers. M. Giffard is tainted by the impurity of someone from the outside—he also owns a dog when no one else does, albeit one that is leashed, and like M. Hulot gets lost in the reflections. M. Giffard is an aberrant character not able to be controlled, but who functions as an exception that proves the rule.

The distinction between oppression and repression needs be established when asking what is repressed, Wood argues (1979, p. 8). In his essay, repression is related to sexual and creative energy.[22] The sexual energy is repressed within the idea of the patriarchal family. Intellectual creative energy is repressed within dull and repetitive labour. Repression and oppression work "…in the interests of alienated labour and the patriarchal

[22] Wood states that there is sexual energy, and there is non-sexual creativity; here the sexual energy has been diverted into socially approved activities, hence creative energy derives from sexual energy, he writes that "… sexuality [is] the source of creative energy in general" (1979, p. 8).

family…" (Wood, 1979, p. 8). While we are oppressed by something "out there", Wood explains that "...what is repressed is not accessible to the conscious mind..." (1979, p. 8). "One might define repression as fully internalised oppression...thereby suggesting both the difference and the connection" (1979, p. 8). Patriarchal capitalism oppresses anything that does not fit into the monogamous heterosexual bourgeois family unit. "What escapes repression has to be dealt with by oppression" (Wood, 1978, p. 8). Wood argues that individuals who do live out this formula subconsciously repress any other ways of life they may wish to pursue, and if another way of life is pursued, the dominant ideology will do its best to discourage the individuals from doing so. Wood insists that the dominant ideology "out there" oppresses the individual and when this oppression is internalised, it becomes subconscious repression. In *Play Time* the modern citizens have internalised the oppression of the corporate capitalist patriarchy, they experience repression—that is, they appear as content, they even vaunt their modern lives, but the film shows that their lives are actually cold, rigid and sterile.

For an exploration of repression, Wood turns to Gad Horowitz, who uses Herbert Marcuse's work on Freud.[23] Horowitz identifies two types of repression, basic and surplus. It is the distinction between the two Wood contends that is "...useful in relation to direct political militancy and so suggestive in relation to the reading of our cultural artefacts (among them our horror films) and through them, our culture itself" (1979, p. 7). Basic repression is common to all cultures and means we can get along with one another. On the other hand, surplus repression is specific to each culture. Wood explains "[It]... is the process whereby people are conditioned from earliest infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture" (1979, p. 7-8). Wood argues that "Surplus repression makes us (if it works) into monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists..." (1979, p. 8) and if it does not work, we become "neurotic or revolutionary" (1979, p. 8). Horowitz uses the work of Marcuse to link surplus repression to Marx's theory of alienated labour, the results of which are said to cause "...frustration, dissatisfaction, anxiety, greed, possessiveness, jealousy, neuroticism" (Wood, 1979, p. 8). These emotions result from the repression of sexual,

[23] Wood is referring to Horowitz's book *Repression: Basic and surplus repression in psychoanalytic Theory: Freud, Reich and Marcuse.*

intellectual and creative energies. These are, Wood contends, "... what psychoanalytic theory shows to be the logical product of patriarchal capitalism" (1979, p. 8). The ideal citizen, Wood states, is,

> the individual whose sexuality is sufficiently fulfilled by the monogamous heterosexual union … and whose sublimated sexuality (creativity) is sufficiently fulfilled in the totally non-creative and non-fulfilling labour (whether in factory or office) to which our society dooms the overwhelming majority of its members (1979, p. 8).

The workings of the dominant ideology repress any excessive creative and sexual energy within the ideal citizen that may threaten the capitalist patriarchy. For the capitalist patriarchy, the ideal citizen is a monogamous, heterosexual person, with an uninspiring job. In *Play Time* this is the bourgeoisie. In the film, the dominant ideology is exemplified in the representation of the family in the apartment scene. The apartment scene is an exemplar of the dominant ideology boxed up and put on display. The father returns to his heterosexual family unit, from a day's work. We see through a huge glass window into the family's living room how one is to live in the modern city. The bourgeois family ideal is quite literally on display to everyone. The family is an example, captured behind glass, of how one is to behave in this city. Their behaviour is measured and controlled because it lets them belong to the dominant social group and live in the modern city; however, they live under an illusion that they are free. In *Play Time,* belonging or not belonging to the empowered social group, in this case, the bourgeoisie, is primarily determined by whether someone is clean or unclean—if they are orderly or not, but means and indications of belonging extend to elements such as the tidy and untidy, and the fashionable and unfashionable. These elements work together to determine if one belongs or does not belong to the bourgeoisie, the dominant group in modern Paris in *Play Time*. In *Play Time,* there is an overwhelmingly stark depiction of an obedient—automaton-like—bourgeois citizenry. The apartment scene shows an obedient patriarchal family unit, the cellular unit of the controlling ideology.

Repression

Wood asks what is repressed, and uses four elements to develop his answer, sexual energy itself, bisexuality, female sexuality and the sexuality of children.[24] For Wood, the other is that which bourgeois society, the embodiment of patriarchal capitalism, cannot accept—the other is anyone who does not fit into the ideal (1979, p. 9). Wood argues that the horror genre is a "... dramatisation of the dual concepts of the repressed and the Other, in the figure of the Monster" (Wood, 1979, p. 11). For Wood, the essential subject of the horror film is the relationship between the monster and normality (1979, p. 14). The concept of the other is a further element of psychoanalysis Wood explores. He notes that the concept of the other is closely related to repression (1979, p. 9). Wood states that the concept of the other can be used in varying ways but the psychoanalytic theorisation of the other is useful to Wood's argument here because the other is not "external to the culture or to the self"; the other is repressed within the individual (1979, p. 9). In Wood's view, the other is any figure that is not the ideal citizen. The ideal citizen rejects the other, anyone who is not a white bourgeois male, while also repressing aspects of the other, which may exist within the self. According to Wood, bourgeois society deals with the other in two ways, either by rejection and annihilation, or by assimilation (Wood, 1979, p. 9). He states,

> One might say that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilisation represses or oppresses, its reemergence dramatised, as in our nightmares, as an object of horror, a matter for terror, and the happy ending (when it exists) typically signifying the restoration of repression (Wood, 1979, p. 11).

Wood suggests that the monster disrupts normality, and in this disruption, that which is repressed within us emerges, threatening the order that is established as normality. Wood's exploration of the monster in terms of its relationship to normality provides further opportunities to explore *Play Time* in relation to the film's representation of the modern

[24] Sexual energy itself is repressed, within the monogamous, heterosexual family unit. Bisexuality is repressed, because both female and male homosexuality pose the greatest threat to the family unit. Female sexuality is repressed because the female sex drive poses a threat to masculinity, part of the patriarchal element of the dominant ideology. Fourthly, the sexuality of children is repressed within the dominant ideology. The sexuality of children is repressed in the patriarchal capitalist ideology is various ways "…from the denial of the infant's nature as a sexual being, to the veto on the expression of sexuality before marriage" (Wood, 1979, p. 10). Wood argues that children are probably the most oppressed members of our society.

city's excessively controlling environment. In *Play Time* it is M. Hulot who is the monster. It is M. Hulot who disrupts the established social order, as Douglas refers to it, and normality as Wood describes it. M. Hulot as the monster is examined in Chapter Six of this thesis.

Conclusion

Wood's work demonstrates the idea of the dominant ideology controlling society through influencing the behaviour of the individual. This is reflected in *Play Time* through the well-behaved, orderly and ultra-hygienic modern citizens. The work of Mary Douglas explains how what is deemed to be filthy is arbitrary and that it is not so much about being "clean" but about maintaining control over the environment and creating meaning for the people within a society. Kristeva further emphasises that what is thought of as unclean is not only arbitrary but is also related to boundaries. The abject is experienced in the demarcation of boundaries. Ultimately the abject reveals that life is meaningless. The abject has a power embedded within it, which can be used socially and therefore politically.

In the modern Paris depicted in *Play Time* nature has been expelled from the city. This causes separation not only between nature and the city but nature and the human body. This chapter has argued that the abjectification of nature establishes and maintains this separation. The dominant ideology embedded within the modern architecture creates the "ideal" citizen—it dictates that if they distance themselves from nature and remain clean and ordered like the city they remain in modern Paris. However, the consequence of transgression of this ultra-cleanliness and order, the drifting towards their natural sometimes messy and unruly bodily selves, means they will no longer belong in modern Paris and will be cast out beyond the city boundary. In the following chapter a historical exploration of Paris in the 19th century is undertaken in order to show how—due to the city's rapid modernisation, specifically, its urban hygiene project—natural elements increasingly came to be read as abject.

CHAPTER TWO

THE 19TH CENTURY SEWERS OF PARIS: URBAN HYGIENE AND THE ABJECT STREET

> The hygienist is a hero. He overcomes the most visceral repugnance, rolls up his shirt sleeves, and takes on the cloaca. He faces the foul unnameable and speaks of that thing of which no one else will speak. No one else dare name it for fear of soiling the image of his knowledge. He alone speaks of it; he alone makes it speak (Laporte, 2000, p. 118).
>
> Excremental issues are at the heart of his accounts, …. (Laporte, 2000, p. 119).

Introduction

Urban hygiene plays a significant role in creating the way the modern city of Paris is depicted in *Play Time*—it performs a function in generating the overall form and content of the film. In order to gain an understanding of why the city is depicted the way it is in *Play Time* one needs to examine the urban history of Paris. Chapter Two will investigate the 19th century urban history of Paris, while Chapter Four explores the 20th century urban history.

In the old city of Paris, before the mid-19th century modernisation project, human excrement ran in many of its streets. However, at the same time human excrement was used to fertilise food crops—linking the city to the cycle of nature (Gandy, 1999). This chapter examines the urban hygiene project for Paris, which involved the renovation of the underground sewers resulting in cleaner streets above ground. It was a significant part of the urban modernisation of Paris in the mid-19th century carried out under the administration of Georges-Eugène Haussmann. This chapter explores how this physical reshaping of the urban fabric created a significantly greater deepening in the divide between nature and the city (Gandy, 1991). Both the urban hygiene project and the physical reshaping of the city contribute to the way Paris is depicted in *Play Time*.

This chapter argues that the modern city in *Play Time* is the culmination of the urban hygiene project for Paris which began in the mid-19th century. In *Play Time* modern Paris is ultra-hygienic yet sterile and devoid of nature. The modern city is almost unliveable, it expels

nature and the essential aspects of human life. Haussmann's work underground, in the renovation of the sewers, enabled the cleansing of the city above ground, however, there is a complexity here in relation to *Play Time*. Ultimately, the urban hygiene project—the renovation of the sewers below ground, and importantly the ideas regarding hygiene embedded within these works—destroys, in the film, the traditional city above ground, the city Tati laments losing. The boulevards and all they entail created by Haussmann's works—that was the city of Paris for the first half of Tati's life—are absent in *Play Time*. The sterilised city of modern Paris is explored in detail in Chapter Five.

In exploring the urban history of Paris this thesis places *Play Time* within its context—where it fits in a historical continuum. Paris has undergone two periods of rapid urban modernisation, the first in the mid-19th century, aforementioned, and again in the mid-20th century. Both modernisation projects contribute to Tati's artistic motivation in the making of the film *Play Time*. It is Tati's experience of Haussmann's boulevards, on which he lived for the first half of his life, and his experience of the modernisation of the city in the post-World War II period, that informs *Play Time*. The historical exploration in this chapter contributes to the understanding of where the film derives its commentary on the urban development of Paris—why Paris is represented the way it is in the film, as a modern city with only insubstantial and immaterial reference to the traditional city. This study is important because it facilitates an exploration of how the shape and form of the city affects the lives of the people who lived there, which is a major theme in both *Play Time* and Tati's earlier film *Mon Oncle*.

In the first rapid modernisation of Paris, occurring between the early 1850s and 1870, Baron Haussmann, under the direction of Napoleon III, radically transformed the city.[25] Haussmann's works turned a city that had many narrow medieval streets, some of

[25] The history of Haussmann's works is complex. The architects Jallon, Napolitano and Boutte begin their book *Paris Haussmann* by discussing "Haussmann's myth"; by this they mean that Haussmann was well known during his lifetime due to the press of the day, and that in his autobiography he places himself as the central figure, playing down the fact that he had many collaborators. Also, the authors state that the renovation plans he used for Paris were largely handed to him from people who had developed urban proposals for Paris previously. Furthermore, the renovation project carried on well after he had left office (2018, p. 3). Maybe it is because the works were such a massive undertaking—significantly changing the city—that giving it one word, Haussmannisation, enables us to consider it, while taking the complexity of project into account. It is a term

which still exist today, into a city with many new broad tree-lined boulevards, that created grand perspectives leading to significant monuments. The historian David Pinkney writes that, before the Napoleon III-Haussmann modernisation,

> The medieval system of streets created an urban labyrinth, a city suited to pedestrian traffic and people riding horses. … There were very few places where traffic could freely move, these being the boulevards and quaysides (1958, p. 14).

The modernisation process also brought the new sewer system stated above, a new fresh water supply system, more roads and footpaths, new train stations, more street lighting, and public parks. After the modernisation, Paris was a city that encouraged an outdoor lifestyle, for the bourgeoisie at least, with cafes, department stores, and places to go and to "see and be seen".

This chapter provides a road map for the thesis, showing the driving forces for the modernisation of Paris in the mid-19th century, being elements such as social control and disease—to which the inadequate sewage system was a significant contributor. It presents the separation of nature and the city as an effect of the urban hygiene project (Gandy, 1991); the filthy and malodorous 19th century city of Paris; aspects of the Paris sewers; and other works in Haussmann's modernisation project, which along with the sewers, contributed to creating the Paris of Tati's youth.

The city and body separated from nature: confined, concealed and controlled

The loss of the link between nature and the city, and nature and the human body, is deftly presented in *Play Time*. Not only are the streets and people spotlessly clean, but there is limited plant and animal life, the minimal nature remaining in the city is either contained or concealed. Significantly, all the trees that characterise Haussmann's boulevards are completely absent in Tati's modern Paris. The separation of the city and nature, and the body and nature, occurred as a result of the process of Paris modernising its sewers and

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that has been applied to other urban modernisation projects in different periods and places. The post-World War II renovation is referred to as the second wave of Haussmannisation, and people refer to Frederick Law Olmsted as "North American's Haussmann" (Davis, 2001, p. 198).

water supply, in tandem with increased use of water for bathing, argues geographer Matthew Gandy in his essay "The Paris sewers and the rationalization of urban space". The renovation of the sewers of Paris played a role physically, in terms of cleanliness, and socially, in terms of behaviour and class (Reid, 1991; Gandy, 1999; Jordan, 1995). Urban and personal hygiene are interlinked and can be used as a form of social control, this is discussed below. The renovation of the sewers, as it cleansed the city, played a role in further disempowering groups within society such as the poor, and women, who during the Second Empire[26] increasingly came to be associated with nature, according to Gandy (1999, p. 34-35).

Another of Haussmann's projects was the renovation of many parks in Paris, such as the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont in the east, which was intended for the working classes. Within this machine-built park an artificial lake and a concrete mountain were created (Strohmayer, 2006). Nature is either artificial or contained in this park. During the modernisation of the Paris sewers, nature became progressively concealed. The city infrastructure that once carried water into the city and waste out were able to be seen—such as an open sewer with its gutter down the centre of the street—but become concealed under the city and within the walls of buildings (Kaika, 2005). Nature is concealed from view. The separation of nature and the city contributes to the reasons why Paris appears as it does in *Play Time*—as an ultra-clean, tightly controlled, lifeless, modern environment.

In the 19th century this separation began because natural elements, such as human excrement, lost their connection with nature and in this process came to be read as "intensely…abject" (Gandy 1999, p. 35). He explains,

> With the growing use of private washrooms, the smell of human excrement began to lose the last semblance of its rural associations with fertility: from now on it was to be indicative of disorder, decay and physical repulsion (1999, p. 32).

[26] The Second Empire began in 1852 with Napoleon III crowned as Emperor, it concluded when he went into exile in 1870 (at this time the Third French Republic was proclaimed). Napoleon III appointed Haussmann as the Prefect of the Seine in 1853 and ceased in this position with the change of government in 1870.

In mid-19th century Paris human excrement was used for fertiliser. The excrement was collected from cesspits and portable night cans and taken to the rubbish tips at the edge of the city, where it was dried over a period of time, and then used as fertiliser for food crops (Gandy, 1999, p. 30; Reid, 1999, p. 11). The produce from the farms would then return to the city and be eaten and so the cycle continued. However, when it became fashionable for the upper classes to wash more often it meant the contents of the cesspit were not as effective when used as fertiliser, because the additional water meant there was less nitrogen per cart load, making the fertiliser less productive. This development and the advent of inorganic fertilisers meant that human excrement ceased to be used in agriculture for fertiliser. "The…growing consumption of water for washing and bathing in private dwellings, … led to a breakdown in pre-modern conceptions of the organic cycle linking the body and the city" (Gandy, 1999, p. 25). For Gandy, "pre-modern" nature takes into account a continuous cycle linking the country—plant and animal life—with the city, and the city with the body.[27]

One of the reasons people started to wash more was because of new standards of hygiene and cleanliness, urban hygiene is interrelated with personal hygiene. The bourgeoisie wanted to put a distance between themselves and "the 'old promiscuity in defecation and the jumble of excremental odours'" (Gandy, 1999, p. 32). A new urban order was created both physically and socially. "The separation and reorganization of space set in motion an increasing dichotomy in the olfactory experience of the urban environment between the middle classes and the labouring poor…" (Gandy, 1999, p. 35). The cleaning of the streets, by modernising the sewer, and the increase in personal bathing meant that the city and some of its people both looked and smelled cleaner. This physical cleaning and modernisation of the city also created a further social divide between the richer and poorer classes. For Gandy:

> The old vertical separation of the classes in the apartment houses of pre-modern Paris was gradually to be supplanted by a new emphasis on horizontal segregation.

[27] During the 19th century with the Haussmannisation of Paris the city's relationship with nature changed from pre-modern to modern—in the Second Empire pre-modern nature has been tamed—modern nature is to be experienced in machine-made, parks and lakes, such as Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (Gandy, 1999, p. 32).

> Under the construction boom of the Second Empire, there was a progressive concentration of the middle classes in the central and western parts of the city. The quest for profit strengthened the social distribution of odours, as the cleansing of the city involved a simultaneous relocation of the working classes and industry to the urban periphery [77] (Gandy, 1999, p. 35).

The modernisation of Paris under Haussmann resulted in shifting the working classes to the edge of the city. This hygiene project at an urban scale was both a physical cleansing of the city, and "social" cleansing of the city. At a personal scale, hygiene became a further distinction between the rich and the poor, between the clean and unclean. This distinction was used not only to discriminate but to control the population of the city. As the bourgeoisie did not want to be associated with the unclean, the abject, being clean increasingly came to be associated with the "propre" (correct and clean)[28]. With the poor in the east and increasingly on the edge of the city, it meant the wealthier classes were less likely to have civil unrest on their doorstep.[29]

Expelling the working classes beyond the city limits was one of Haussmann's primary aims in the modernisation of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century (Harvey, 2005; Jordan, 1995). While the urban renovations created benefits for some, the tourists and the bourgeoisie for instance, the working classes suffered greatly, both during and after the construction of Haussmann's works. They were displaced by Haussmann's modernisation—first by the built fabric being demolished and secondly by rent increases making the new and existing buildings unaffordable. Haussmann made no provision for new housing for the working classes and as a result many people moved to what became newly formed slums on the edge of the city (Jordan, 1995, p. 292). Jordan states that,

[28] In English proper has the meaning of correct; in French propre means correct but it also means clean. When Leon S. Roudiez translated Julia Kristeva's book *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection* in to English he asked did she mean correct or clean, she answered both (Kristeva [Roudiez], 1982, p. viii).

[29] Strikes and protests leading to civil unrest still occur in the centre of Paris, such as the student and workers strike of May 1968 and the Yellow Vest Movement beginning in 2018, but overall to purchase or rent of housing within the Paris city border today is more expensive, excluding many, than when Haussmann's began his works in the early 1850s..

> The streets had to be cleansed culturally as well as physically. The permanent 'fair' of the popular streets was either domesticated for the bourgeoisie, who now flowed out doors to enjoy the boulevard life, or exiled eastwards often beyond the city to the *banlieue* [suburbs] (1995, p. 350).

In the pre-Haussmann era the streets belonged to the working classes. After Haussmann, as discussed above, the boulevards became the place of the bourgeoisie—the boulevards' reputation became global, tourists came from all over the world to see and experience Haussmann's boulevards, as they still do today.

The 19th century urban hygiene project is intertwined with personal hygiene and civil unrest. Reid makes the connection between the underground sewers' negative impact on public hygiene and the bourgeoisie's notion that the working classes came from the sewers—they believed that civil unrest would erupt from below the city, from the sewers (1995, p. 2). When actually, as Reid later points out, it was within the labyrinth of the streets of old Paris, where the working classes lived, that they "hid" from the authorities, and from where the civil unrest erupted.

In the same period that the urban hygiene project commenced, in the mid-19th century, government institutions such as schools and the military began personal hygiene education programmes, mostly aimed at the working classes. The idea, in part at least, was to limit civil unrest—by trying to make the working classes more like the bourgeoisie, who were mostly cleaner and generally accepting of political order. The intention was that the working classes would be more orderly in their appearance, emulating the bourgeoisie, and this would translate into their behaviour. Historian Steven Zdatny argues that,

> Those who taught the virtues of cleanliness often salted this practical message with morality, as in the 1871 primer telling elementary students that 'dirty bodies and clothes bespeak a dirty soul'[29] […] The 'civilizing mission' of the schools and the military and the architects of public housing always remained at some level a war against social revolution[30] (2012, p. 906).

Gina Marie Greene, architectural historian, argues similarly that cleanliness was used as a means of trying to change the thinking of, and thereby controlling, the working-class population (2012, p. 123-124). Hygiene is closely linked to class. Class is linked to behaviour, how one carries oneself, the things one does and does not do. In the 19th century and for much of the 20th century substantial income was required in order to maintain a clean body and clean clothing. In the first two thirds of *Play Time* the characters are one homogenised demographic—apart from a small group of outsiders, none of whom live in modern Paris—this in many ways reflects Haussmann's intention to empty out the working classes from Paris in order to create a city for the bourgeois and their capital.

Even though the urban hygiene project for Paris started to cleanse the urban environment, the city was still haunted by the idea that the sewers contained a lurking threat which could emerge from the underground. The "rationalizing impulse of modernity" (Gandy, 1999, p. 33) unleashed upon the old city of Paris created a new orderly city, comparatively, yet it was still haunted by the mythic space of the underground sewers. Gandy argues, "It is suggested that the sewers form an enduring element of the 'urban uncanny', through their integral interrelationship with changing conceptions of bodily abjection and urban order" (Gandy, 1999, p. 25). That is, the citizens of Paris still felt the sewers continued to threaten the new order of the city. This threat came in the form of bodily disorder, unclean people, and social disorder, unrest and revolts amongst the populace. The underground sewers were a representation of this threat (Gandy, 1999, p. 33). Gandy observes, "Yet the rationalizing impulse of modernity could never completely erase the surviving elements of a mythic urban space within which metaphors of bodily and social disorder could powerfully resurface to haunt the newly regulated urban society" (Gandy, 1999, p. 33).

Another threat to social order was, according to Gandy, female sexuality and the way it was believed to be associated with nature at this time. "The relegation of women to an opposite world of nature and unreason had an increasingly powerful hold over the prevailing political and intellectual outlooks of nineteenth-century Paris…" (Gandy, 1999, p. 34). Gandy

postulates that during the Second Empire, the lakes and fountains in public parks featuring naked virginal female statues were a celebration of female form for male pleasure, and a way of controlling women's sexuality—a way of taming nature (1999, p. 34).

> The association of women with impurity is not, of course, an invention of modernity, yet it is the reworking of pre-modern beliefs in the context of capitalist urbanization that is of interest here. In Second Empire Paris, the repression of bodily functions in bourgeois society became increasingly manifested in a fear of women and the poor (Gandy, 1999, p. 34).

Gandy argues that readings of nature which drew on modern science contributed to a new-found emphasis on a domestic ideal and the difference in gender roles. The new underground sewers came to be equated with an untamed nature—a "dangerous female sexuality" (Gandy, 1999, p. 34). He explains that the binary approach of associating "good", sweet smelling, tamed women with being at home, and the "bad", foul smelling, undomesticated, wild natured women with the underground, was used to oppress women (Gandy, 1999, p. 34-35). "Disease and moral degeneration mingled with threat of women and the labouring classes and together threatened the middle-classes" (Gandy, 1999, p. 36). Women, Gandy argues, were understood as threatening the social order of the city and like the working classes, this distinction was made, in part at least, through bodily odours, which were associated with personal hygiene.

A further example of controlling the population through urban design and increasing the division between nature and the city is the building of parks such as the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, according to geographer Ulf Strohmayer (2006). The park was constructed during the Second Empire as part of Haussmann's works, in the north east of Paris. It was intended for the working classes, who lived in nearby areas, to spend recreational time. The driving premise of the park was to provide "morally upright" activities for the working classes to partake in, rather than, for example, drinking in the cheap bars, the "guinguettes" (Strohmayer, 2006, p. 564). Strohmayer informs us that the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont:

> …was not the only 'green' space to be incorporated into the makeover of the city: both the (existing) Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes underwent extensive regenerations during this period, the Parc Monceau in the 17th arrondissement was altered dramatically, and the Parc Montsouris … was built from scratch (2006, p. 559).

The Parc des Buttes-Chaumont was built in an area of Paris where Montfaucon, the notorious medieval gallows, once stood, and later a rubbish tip, receiving and drying the city's excrement, was located. In the time the park was under construction gypsum quarries nearby hid members of the underclasses who "sought refuge in caves and tunnels [of the quarries] and who added to a perception of danger and the eerie quality of the area" (Strohmayer, 2006, p. 561). The new park provided an ostensible natural environment, but to use Gandy's term it was a "modern nature", a controlled environment, much of it only resembling nature. David Harvey writes that the new and restored parks of the Second Empire were,

> … of course, a constructed concept of nature that was at work here, and it was fashioned according to very distinctive criteria. …arcadian visions, Gothic designs and romantic conceptions of the restorative powers of access to a pristine, nonthreatening (therefore tamed), …. [nature] (2005, p. 240-241).

The Parc des Buttes-Chaumont features a manmade lake, which has water pumped up to it from a canal below (Strohmayer, 2006, p. 565). At this park, Strohmayer suggests, the disorderly nature has been made into controllable nature through technology—new concrete technology contributed to the park's central mountain height and shape. The new reinforced concrete was also used around the park to stand in for various other natural elements such as stalactites, grottos, and timber fences (Strohmayer, 2006, p. 565). The urban "modern nature" of the second empire was to be found in parks and manmade lakes. Modern nature is concerned with urban leisure, and not publicly experienced as a necessity of life, for example having water piped into the home rather than collecting it from the public well. In the modernised leisure parks nature is neat, clean and controlled (*see figure*

2.1).

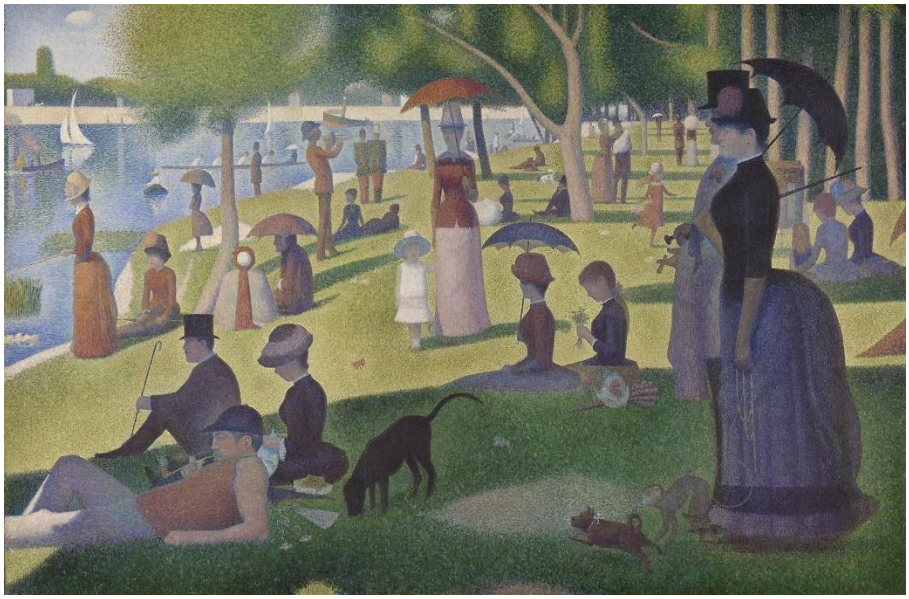

Figure 2.1: A Sunday on La Grande Jatte by Georges Seurat 1884
Île de la Jatte is an island on the Seine just outside of Paris, to the north west. It is a different location to the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, which is in the east, but shows a picture of tamed nature, used for recreation, and not the necessities of life such as drinking water.
Image source: https://www.artic.edu/artworks/27992/a-sunday-on-la-grande-jatte-1884

Modern technology, the new sewer system and its infrastructure, played a significant role in creating a separation of the city and nature. Geographer Maria Kaika argues that discourse around modernity constructed the compartmentalisation of the early modern city and nature. In the period of early modernity, which for Kaika is from the mid-19th century to 1914, the elements of urban technological modernity, technological network carriers such as water towers and power stations, were visible and proudly shown off, designed as things to be admired within the city, and appeared in representations of the city as symbols of progress. Kaika argues that controlling the sewers and water flows in western cities stemmed from a desire to control nature. She writes, "…the Promethean promise…[of]…science and technological innovation would pave the way for breaking the chains of slavery to nature…" (Kaika, 2005, p. 34). When it became apparent that modernity and its technology would not provide the expected emancipation from nature (Kaika, 2005, p. 34), the disconnection between nature and city became even greater, as the pipes and tunnels, for example, which carried the water to and from the city became purposefully hidden in walls and underground, out of sight (2005, p. 28-29). Previously, in an earlier stage of modernity, they were proudly displayed in the city. As Kaika explains,

> …urban networks have not *always* been opaque. Along with their 'urban dowry' (water towers, dams, plumbing stations, power plants, gas stations, etc.), they have undergone important historical changes in their visual role and their material importance in the cityscape (2005, p. 28).

In *Play Time* all the infrastructure related to urban hygiene is buried deep within the city, it is as if the modern city and its citizens are in denial of its existence. Even the change in scale, from the urban to the architectural, the interface between the infrastructure and the human—the taps, showers, toilets—make little appearance. This absence is discussed in Chapter Five.

In sum, during the urban hygiene project for Paris in the Second Empire separation of nature and the city began (Gandy, 1999). The streets of the city became cleaner due to the modernisation of the sewers. As the city became cleaner so did its wealthier classes, as they began to bathe more, meaning the contents of the cesspits and night cans produced less useful fertiliser for the farmer who used it to grow their fruit and vegetables—eventually the cans and cesspits were replaced by the city sewer system altogether. Human excrement was replaced by other fertilisers in agriculture. As excrement lost its association with fertility the city and its people lost their connection with nature. Concurrently, urban and personal hygiene formed a new type of discrimination, contributing further to the disempowerment of some groups within the city. The bad smells of the old city remained and were associated with the poorer classes and where they lived. It was increasingly believed that "good" women smelt good, and "bad" women did not (Gandy, 1999, p. 34-35). This belief is a form of behaviour control, similar to the notion of behaving like a lady or being lady-like. It sets out a type of behaviour, as we know, that is disempowering for women as they are rendered demure, mostly silent, and absent from public life, in this posing less of a threat to those who hold the power within a society.

Urban design has played a role in controlling the population of the city, as the wealthier areas of the city and the people became cleaner, cleanliness and distancing from

nature became increasingly associated with power. Those who can conform mostly do—those who cannot conform to the new standards of hygiene are disempowered even further. Raw nature, unmediated by human progress, was no longer sanctioned in the city. Nature within the city boundary began to be controlled and even constructed, such as the concrete mountain in the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont. It was pushed underground and encased within the walls of buildings. Nature is controlled, constrained and concealed. By the end of the Second Empire, when Haussmann was dismissed from office, while Paris had already become noticeably cleaner, it still had a long way to go. The filthy state of Paris before the works of Haussmann will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

A malodourous city: Human excrement and other rotting organic matter

In the first part of the 19th century, in the pre-Haussmann period, Paris had a rapid population increase which meant significant overcrowding in a city that was already densely populated. The Farmers' Tax Wall formed a boundary around the city from 1784 to 1860, which also formed the legal city limits of Paris. In 1860 the boundary of Paris was expanded to bring the number of arrondissements from twelve to the twenty of today (Jordan, 1995, p. 284) (*see figure 2.2*). However, before this expansion the Tax Wall around the city had prevented outward expansion. It grew to fill in almost all the available space, first horizontally and then vertically. Jordan writes that "The city grew in upon itself rather that outward, creating a congested, chaotic, incoherent jumble" (1995, p. 93). This large population in a relatively small area contributed to significant urban issues such as human waste, hygiene, and mass disease outbreaks.

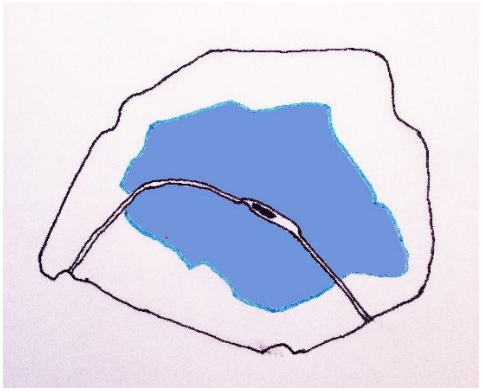

Figure 2.2: The Farmers' Tax Wall
The farmers' tax wall (in blue) formed the boundary of Paris until a new boundary of city was created which includes the 20 arrondissements, of today (in black).
Image source: Diagrammatic plan of Paris by author

In many areas of Paris in the first half of the 19th century the streets were generally incredibly dirty, narrow, twisting, and without direct sunlight. The streets in the photographs by Charles Marville—who was engaged by Haussmann to document "vieux Paris" (old Paris before 1850) before and during its demolition (Harvey, 2005, p. 148)—often look like rain has just fallen on them, when it was usually raw sewage running in the street (Harvey, 2005, p. 244) (*see figures 2.3 and 2.4*). Many Parisian streets operated both as thoroughfares, and as actual sewers (Jordan, 1995, p. 94). Until Haussmann's project, Paris had a hugely inadequate medieval underground sewer system (Pinkney, 1958, p. 19). Above ground, the streets themselves would carry not only rainwater, but kitchen waste, offal, human and animal excrement. For the most part the underground sewers only flowed when it rained, and so the organic waste that found its way into the sewers from streets above often sat rotting (Reid, 1999, p. 13). Furthermore, the sewers were rarely cleaned, and they often became blocked, so when it did rain the sewers would overflow and flood parts of the city with a soup of decaying excrement and other rotting organic matter (Pinkney, 1958, p. 129).

Figure 2.3: Paris street, photograph by Charles Marville
Rue des Prêtres-Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, 1er arrondissement ca 1965
Image source: https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-carnavalet/oeuvres/rue-des-pretres-saint-germain-l-auxerrois-1er-arrondissement-paris-0#infos-principales

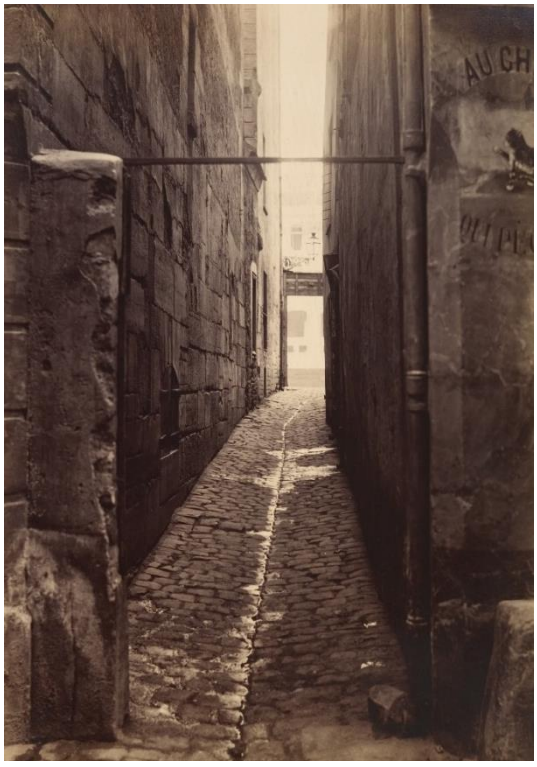

Figure 2.3: Paris street, photograph by Charles Marville
Rue du Chat-qui-Pêche (from the Rue de la Huchette) ca 1968
Image source: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/283714

Paris, by many accounts, in the mid-19th century was a foul-smelling city (Pinkney, 1958, p. 18; Reid, 1999, p. 29). Historian David Pinkney quotes the letters of the novelist Frances Trollope, who on her visit to Paris in the 1830s was aghast at the state of the sewers of Paris and asked, if other cities could provide adequate urban infrastructure for sewage and drainage, why the French could not (Pinkney, 1958, p. 128).[30] According to historian David P. Jordan, the wealthy felt the streets were so filthy they did not enter them on foot, instead travelling from one high walled courtyard to another in carriages, avoiding "…the stinking, dirty, narrow, dangerous street…" (1995, p. 94). Jordan further describes this early 19th century street through the words of another visitor to Paris,

> Stendhal called the Parisians 'barbarians' whose 'streets exhale an infected odour; one cannot take a step without being covered with a black mud' that is the result of 'the absurd idea of having made your streets a general sewer' (1995, p. 94).

The streets and the city as a whole were foul smelling, the stench of Paris could be sensed on one's approach to it. Historian Alain Corbin notes, in *The Foul and Fragrant*, that in 1837 the Chairman of the "Conseil Salubrite" (the health council) wrote that when approaching Paris travellers could smell its foul odours before the city itself was visible. "'Soon the sense of smell gives notice that you are approaching the first city in the world, before your eyes could see the tips of its monuments [15]'" (Corbin, 1986, p. 115). This was in part because the city's rubbish tips were located outside the city walls, and mainly contained human excrement (1986, p. 115), so contributed to the malodour of the city on its approach, yet inside the city walls rotting organic material was also abundant.

The odours of the city which further contributed to the stench included horse manure, from over 30,000 horses, and the household garbage that sat on the street (Pinkney, 1958, p. 19). According to pioneering French urban hygienist Alexandre Jean Baptiste Parent-Duchatelet (1790-1835), wastewater from kitchens thrown into the street and left to dry created one of the most horrible odours in the city (Corbin, 1986, p. 25). Furthermore, Corbin notes that, "The walls of Paris houses were stained by urine" (1986, p. 27), however, according to Pinkney what contributed most to the offensive smell of Paris

[30] The letters appear in a book by Frances Trollope titled *Paris and the Parisians in 1835*.

was "…the sewers, and the gutters that substituted for them on many streets, and the cesspools and carts used in the disposal of human excrement" (Pinkney, 1958, p. 19). Whichever element contributed most to the smell, it is clear that Paris had a great stench, which amongst other reactions caused comment from the city's visitors and concern from its urban hygienists. In more affluent areas excrement was collected at night, from cesspits or night cans, and carted out to dumping stations at the city boundary. However, on occasion, the cesspit cleaners would empty the contents of their carts into the street, where it ran in street gutters and eventually into the underground medieval sewers (Corbin, 1986, p. 27). Prior to the 1850s the medieval underground sewer drained into the River Seine along with other pollutants which "…came from the wastes of households and shops, and the seepage of cesspools and cemeteries" (Pinkney, 1958, p. 19). Coursing through the heart of the city, the Seine was virtually an open sewer.

Haussmann, the boulevards and other works

Haussmann first worked for Napoleon III from 1849 to 1853 in the Second Republic and then, after a coup d'état led by Napoleon III, in the Second Empire—from 1853 to 1870, as Prefect of the Seine. Haussmann not only modernised the sewers and cut new boulevards through Paris, but he also created a great number of additional streets and footpaths. He planted an enormous number of trees within the city and enlarged the number and size of public parks (Carmona, 2002, p. 396-401). He added an additional 200,000 buildings to the city and 18,000 streetlights (Sowerwine, 2009, p. 3). Other elements, beyond the architecture and urban design contributing to the experience of the modernised city, include the expansion of the railway system and city-wide regulation of public transport, including horse-drawn omnibuses, which later evolved into the metro (Carmona, 2002 p. 402-403).

The new boulevards contributed to creating a street life unique to Paris. "On Haussmann's boulevards an elegant, sophisticated, vital, cosmopolitan, uniquely Parisian life was lived" (Jordan, 1995, p. 348). Marshall Berman argues that the new boulevards were chaotic and thrilling and had an activity unknown before, which also inspired artists such as painters, writers, photographers and eventually filmmakers (1988, p. 151). This vibrancy of the street is the opposite of the experience depicted in *Play Time*. Berman again on the

experience of Haussmann's boulevards, "In this environment, urban realities could easily become dreamy and magical. The bright lights of the street and cafe only heightened the joy…" (Berman, 1988, p. 152). Berman argues that the new Napoleon-Haussmann boulevards were a major urban invention because they present the most significant result of the modernisation of Paris, in that the boulevards allowed for modern life to evolve—they gave birth to a modernity and the modern experience (Berman, 1988, p. 150-152). Here the urban fabric of the city is shaping the people—their experience and ultimately who they are (Berman, 1988, p. 147).

Haussmann's new boulevards allowed capitalism to flourish, playing a role in the modernisation of the economy (Berman, 1988, p. 229). They allowed the traffic to flow faster into and around the newly renovated areas of the city, allowing businesses to flourish—the boulevards were instruments of the bourgeoisie and the state (Berman, 1995). In *Play Time* the hustle and bustle, the chaos of the turn of the century city is absent. Berman, referring to the work of urbanist and activist Jane Jacobs, argues that later twentieth century modern architecture created clean and orderly streets but these streets were without life, and it was the congestion and noise, and the dirt that actually kept urban life alive (1995, p. 170).

Just as Tati laments losing Haussmann's boulevards in the post-World War II wave of modernisation, many similarly lamented losing "*le vieux Paris"* (old Paris, before 1850). Such as the poet Charles Baudelaire, who was born in 1821 and so was in his early 30s when Haussmann began the urban transformation of Paris—meaning he was an adult and fully familiar with the existing fabric of Paris and the life it created or allowed for. Vaheed Ramazani, a theorist of French literature and culture, in an essay regarding pain, the body, and the city, writes that,

> …[in the] last decade of Baudelaire's life, [he died in 1867]…he was writing the majority of his prose poems, [in which] politics and pain converged [reflecting] …. Baron Haussmann's violent reconfiguration of the urban body (1996, p. 209).

Clearly Haussmann's modernisation of the city did not work well for everyone. These new boulevards for the most part benefited only the wealthy, and as Ramazani suggests the Haussmannisation of Paris for Baudelaire, at least, caused great pain, a psychological pain that manifested itself in the physical body of the poet, via the physical fabric of the city.

The sewers of Paris

The urban hygiene movement in Paris was one of the major driving forces in the urban modernisation project in the mid-19th century (Higonnet, 2002, p. 181). Alexandre Jean Baptiste Parent-Duchatelet was one of the first and most influential advocates for public health. He brought the issues of the sewers, water supply and waste removal to public attention in the early part of the 19th century (Jordan, 1995, p. 268). A key aim of the urban hygiene movement was to clean the city of Paris in order to rid it of disease. Patrice Higonnet, in his book *Paris: Capital of the world*, argues that the major instigation for the cleansing of Paris was two cholera epidemics in the first half of the 19th century—rather than "the memory of the barricades" (2002, p. 181). In the epidemic of 1832, 20,000 people died, and 19,000 died in 1849 (Higonnet, 2002, p. 181). It was thought the drinking water, which contained sewage, was the cause of cholera, which to a point was correct, however it was believed at the time that the bad smell, a miasma, carried the disease and not the contaminated water. People believed the very stench of the city air could kill. The belief that diseases such as cholera were transmitted by bad air, rather than water, continued to be held by the vast majority of the population in Paris, up until 1895 at least (Barnes, 2006).

The modernisation of the sewers of Paris was the most significant achievement under Haussmann's administration in that this urban hygiene project began a long yet eventually successful cleansing of the city (Gandy, 1991; Jordan, 1995, p. 267). Haussmann and his various teams transformed twenty percent of the urban fabric of Paris above ground, while below ground, he extended the sewerage network by eighty percent. Harvey writes that, "… the length of city streets doubled during the Second Empire (from 424 kms to 850 kms) the sewer system grew more than fivefold (from 143 kms to 773 kms)" (2005, p. 246). The renovation of the sewers underground allowed for the cleansing of the city aboveground.

Paris had had some underground or covered sewers since the 1300s (Reid, 1999, p. 12), however, between 1800 and 1850 the population had doubled (Reid, 1995, p. 16), and the existing mileage of the medieval sewer network was thoroughly unable to cope with the population growth. When Haussmann and the engineer, Eugene Belgrand, began the renovation of the sewers in the early 1850s, they first had to map the existing sewers before the work could begin, as no one officially had a complete understanding of how they were laid out. This was in part because some of the underground sewers had been privately built and were at times forgotten, or not recorded by the city as part of a comprehensive integrated system, which could be drawn on the one plan. The literally unknown aspect of the underground sewers possibly contributed their mystery and to the idea Parisians held that criminals hid in them, which is discussed next in this chapter through the work of Victor Hugo.

Historian Donald Reid, in *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations*, notes that the sewers of Paris appear in Victor Hugo's work more than that of any other French author. In Hugo's novel, *Les Miserables,* originally published in 1862, the sewers he describes are those of the pre-Haussmann era, starting in the 1830s then stretching over a twenty-year period. In Hugo's novel this is where the criminal classes hid (Reid, 1991, p. 20)—in an environment which was understood as "horrible, unknown...impure" (Reid, 1991, p. 20). Reid argues that Hugo's work was hugely influential in creating, in the popular mind, the idea that sewers were dark, filthy, horrid and mysterious. This occurred because Hugo was so widely read by the French public, and beyond (Reid, 1991, p. 20). During the 19th century the sewers were cause for both attraction and repulsion for the people living in Paris, for tourists and for those familiar with Paris and its literature. Towards the end of the 19th century the sewers became tourist attractions, symbols of modern technological innovation. However, David Pinkney suspects that it is Victor Hugo's grotesque and frightening sewers of the 1830s that tourists were hoping to see and not the newly renovated sewers of Haussmann, which were wide, comparatively brightly lit with electric light, and relatively clean (*see figure 2.5*).

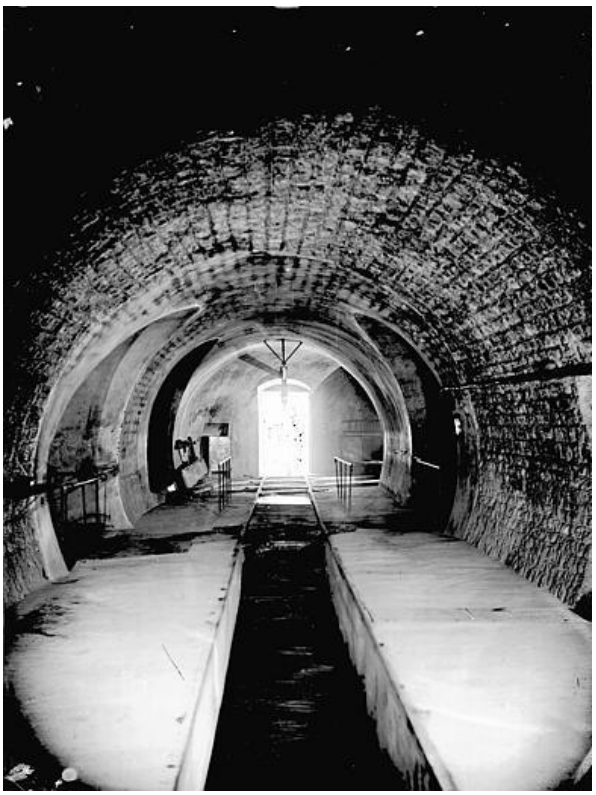

Figure 2.5: Renovated Paris sewers 1860
"Vue d'une galerie des égouts de Paris" (View of a gallery in the sewers of Paris) photograph by Félix Nadar
Image source: Ministere de la Culture https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr

When Haussmann left office, in 1870, the sewerage works remained unfinished (Aisenberg, 1999, p. 107). Haussmann originally planned for them to carry mostly storm water (Barnes, 2006, p. 52) and wastewater from houses. Human waste was to have a separate disposal system. Before 1852 it was illegal to have houses connected to the underground sewer system (Reid, 1991, p. 29-30). However, a new regulation in that year stated that all new and renovated buildings, which were on a road with a sewer, had to be connected to the underground sewer system. This connection was only to be used for wastewater and not, as noted, for human waste (Reid, 1991, p. 29-30).

A lengthy debate, running over a decade, began as to whether the new sewers would carry human waste (Aisenberg, 1999). It was finally decided in 1884 to use the Paris sewers for both storm water and human excrement. Yet it was not until the 1930s that all houses in Paris were connected to the underground sewer system (Gandy, 1999, p. 36-37), as stated in the introduction to this thesis. Thus, it was only in the 20th century that the modernisation of the sewers meant that the streets were cleaned of most of the human excrement, urine, and other organic waste. The pristine Paris streets of Jacques Tati's *Play Time* are the antithesis

of the 19th century Parisian streets, with their abject contents, aspects of which still lingered in the first half of the 20th century, during Tati's youth.

Play Time's urban form takes its design inspiration from ideas about hygiene. However, *Play Time*, with its almost complete absence of any natural elements, creates an environment which is equally as inhospitable, although in a different way, to the filthy streets of earlier times in Paris. In *Play Time* it is not only the modern city which is clean but also the people. In fact, they are represented in the film at times as not only ultra-hygienic, but as mechanical, bloodless entities as the modern city, depicted in the film, does not welcome the human body, the with its messy bodily fluids and activities; this is explored in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

The gallimaufry of activity, smells, and textures of an earlier Paris is absent in *Play Time.* On the one hand, the life of Haussmann's city has been extinguished, on the other there has been a continuation of his urban hygiene project. This chapter has argued that while the old 19th century city of Paris caused illness and death amongst its people due mostly to its inadequate sewers, and its methods of general waste disposal, in the film Haussmann's urban hygiene project, which was embraced by successive generations, has caused dire consequences for the inhabitants of modern Paris—the modern city of Paris, as it appears in the film, is clean but dead—the life of the city has been extinguished by the antiseptic modern architecture. The modern city in the film is the culmination of Haussmann's urban hygiene project.

In the mid-19th century modernisation of Paris, natural elements such as human excrement increasingly came to be read as abject, contributing to a greater separation of nature and the city (Gandy, 1999). In *Play Time* the expulsion of nature from the city clearly demarcates a boundary between that which is modern and that which is not, between the clean and the unclean. The physical cleansing of Paris entailed a "social cleansing" as well. In Haussmann's modernisation project the working classes were moved towards the Paris city boundary. Tati's experience of Paris in the first half of the 20th century, and his experience of the rapid urban transformation of Paris in the post-World War II period, contributes

significantly to the way the city appears in *Play Time*—in the film the Paris of Tati's youth is absent. In the period the film was made the urban fabric of the actual city was being radically reshaped. The film is an expression of the loss of a familiar and well-loved Paris.

The following chapter explores, in conjunction with the rational, elements in the cinema such as the emotional, memories and dreams and how this complexity is used to understand the city. The intangible aspects of the human condition play a role in how we experience the city.

CHAPTER THREE

CINEMA AS CONSTRUCTING PERSPECTIVES OF THE CITY

> The fabric of Paris naturally influenced those who lived and worked there, none more than practitioners of the 'seventh art', photographers and filmmakers, for whom the city would become a favourite subject (Cronin, 1994, p. 95).

Introduction

Film facilitates a complex understanding of the city that includes elements such as the emotional and imaginary, dreams and memories—the intangible things that are hard to grasp with a rational argument but nonetheless are a part of and influence the human experience—this is one of the benefits of using film to understand our cities. This chapter explores the intertwining of the rational and irrational in the cinema and how it tells us something about how we live in cities. This chapter argues that the modern Paris in *Play Time* was designed without addressing this human complexity and that film facilitates an understanding of this complexity, which is able to inform our understanding of the city, creating cities that work for rather than against the people who live in them. Film promotes an exploration of how our own bodies interact with the city and how the urban fabric shapes our experiences of it; here the physical and the emotional are interrelated, for example, the physical fabric of the city can enable or prohibit community between people. This idea is a major theme in both *Play Time* (Marie, 2001) and *Mon Oncle*.

Removing familiar aspects of the urban environment affects our experience of the city, it affects the way we move within it—from an almost stationary touch of a hand on its smooth and rough textures to moving past quickly in motorised transport. However, the built environment also holds the memories of its inhabitants, and removing it takes something away from the people of the city emotionally. While our cities are constantly changing, we need to take this human complexity into consideration when designing them—this is a central contention in *Play Time*. Tati's experience of Paris, his emotional connections, his intellectual thoughts about, and his memories and bodily experience of the city contribute to Tati's creation of *Play Time.*

The cinema can show us not only what the city *is*—or what someone's perspective of what the city is and how it is experienced—but also what the city might be. All the film types that run between realism and the fantastic, for example, can provide opportunities to study the city and gain further understanding of architecture and urbanism, both as a rational entity and the role it plays in our memories and emotions. These are just some filmic examples that have been used in understanding the modern city—both by the film viewing public at large and also by scholars in disciplines such as film studies, French studies, and architecture: *Metropolis Fritz Lang* (1927), *Berlin Symphony of a city* (1927), *Sunrise* (1927), *Man with a movie camera* (1929), *Just imagine* (1930), *Things to come* (1936), *1984* (1956), *Alphaville* (1965), *2 or 3 Things I know about her* (1966), *Play Time* (1967), *THX 1138* (1971), *Logan's run* (1976), *Blade Runner* (1982), *The Castle* (1997) and *The Bothersome Man* (2007).

The first section of this chapter explores film and narrative in relation to our attempts to understand our cities, ourselves, and our worlds. The second section examines the real and the fictive in both film and our experience of the world. The third section of this chapter will look at the ways various authors have used film to understand the city, and the fourth section looks at a particular way film has contributed to the understanding of modern architecture, by examining how the modern architecture of the 1920s and 1930s made its way into the popular mind via Hollywood cinema. The final section addresses a film from the city symphony genre, *"Rien que les heures" (Nothing but Time)* (1926) directed by Alberto Cavalcanti, a central film to this genre which emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. This city symphony film is discussed alongside *Play Time* (1967) and *Chronicle of a summer* (1960). All three films tell us something about Paris and provide insights into Tati's experience of the city and how this informs *Play Time*.

Film, story, emotion

It is filmic storytelling, and particularly the filmic storytelling of Jacques Tati, which this thesis addresses. Julia Kristeva claims that literature can help us understand life and ourselves, although literature is often left aside in our understandings (Kristeva, 1982, p. 208), but as we know storytelling is an ancient form of sharing knowledge. Science is often given the privilege, when considering the contemporary forces that shape our lives. However, authors such as Kristeva and film scholar Gabrielle Murray show that cultural

products such as literature and the cinema are central to understanding the human experience. Murray's argument demonstrates why Kristeva, herself and others have argued for this complex approach to understanding our experience in the present day. Murray argues that the cinema can teach us about the world. We are living in a world where "Our current reality is rational, Euclidean, and driven by progress" (Murray, 2004, p. 2). The phenomenal and imaginary are marginalised or ignored (Murray, 2004, p. 3). Our understanding of the world must take into account the complexity of the rational, the Euclidean, the emotional and phenomenal, the intangible, the somatic, in the pursuit of the acquisition of knowledge, as they are all part of the lived experience.

The emotional and sensual are important elements to consider when understanding architecture and the city and are often absent in the planning and design of cities. In her book *Terror and Joy: The Films of Dusan Makavejev,* sociologist and film scholar Lorraine Mortimer argues for the importance of film in understanding the emotional, sensual and the rational in our understanding of the world. She writes, "Any worthwhile rationality needs to be tolerant with regard to mysteries" (2009, p. 29). Mortimer also argues that film teaches not only about the rational, but also the emotional and sensual (Mortimer, 2009, p. 29). This lack of consideration for the emotional, the imaginary, and the physicality of the human body is something Tati is criticising in *Play Time.*

In her introduction to the translation of French sociologist Edgar Morin's book The Cinema or the Imaginary man, Mortimer argues that his work explores modernity's dismissal of myth and magic and its reliance instead on technology and rationalism to live in the world. Morin argues that we need myth and magic, because humans need not only food and shelter—film can provide the poetic magic we need to exist, which has been jettisoned from the technocratic modern world (2005, p. xi-xxxix). Furthermore, not only did the cinema provide some the poetic magic lost to technocratic rationalism, but modern audiences took to it readily and in large numbers because we live in a semi-imaginary world, argues Morin (2005, p. 201-218).31

[31] The Lumiere brothers screened their first film in 1895; the first Hollywood studio was established only 16 years later.

These investigations into the connections between the physical space of the city and the emotional connections one has with the city form a central concern for Tati in *Play Time*. This is evidenced by his emphasis on the isolation, coldness and disorientation of the modern city in early sections of the film. On one hand, the tabula rasa of traditional Paris took away all the memories of the old city. On the other hand, the new city actively keeps people apart (Marie, 2001). The first problematic is the destruction of the memories and way of life embedded within the physical fabric of the traditional city. The second problematic is that the modern city has an inhuman design—a design that considers its own aesthetic over the human experience.

The modern city's homogeneity in form, combined with its grey tones and hard surfaces, creates a dull and cold experience. This homogeneity in turn provides no informal signposts, causing disorientation. The ever-present glass with its transparency and reflections further contributes to the disorientation and it literally keeps people from each other physically; hence it can be argued emotionally, again resulting in this modern city in *Play Time* being read as cold. Towards the end of the film, when the architecture is destroyed as Laurent Marie argues, the people come together (2001). In doing this, they are creating experiences and memories which are embedded and embodied—almost—within the physical structures of the city. The physical design of the architecture, to a point, is and is not important, it is how it makes people feel and what it does and does not allow them to do that is important.

The real and the fictive

Tati's films blur the real and the fictive. In Tati's films the inter-connectedness between the film world and the world outside the film, where the viewer is, proves especially important. In an interview in 1968, with Andre Fieschi and Jean Narboni, Tati stated that when sitting in a café, "… I have this window open wide on to the street. Hence the wide screen [used in Play Time]; it's the same screen" (Fieschi and Narboni, 2017, p. 113). Tati received a letter from a 14 year old boy after a screening of *Traffic,* the boy wrote "What I really liked was that, at the end of the film, when I was back in the street the film was still going on"; Tati states that the boy understood the film better than any of the

journalists (Castle, 2019, p. 32, Vol 5).[32] Tati's reflection on the boy's letter indicates the connection Tati creates between the film world and the "real" world people live in. In some ways Tati engages his film audience directly. Tati's characters Francois and M. Hulot are often shown to be watching what the film viewer also sees—the characters watch the action with the viewer. An example of this is in his film *Jour de Fete* (1949). At one point in the film when the merry-go-round and other activities have been set up and the fair is underway, Francois manages to find himself on the first storey of one of the buildings overlooking the village square. Francois is looking out of the window, the camera is behind him, we see the back of his head and the activities of the fair beyond, we are watching them with Francois. Another example is found in *Play Time*, when M. Hulot is in the waiting room and an American businessman enters and sits down, he performs a kind of stiff seated ballet, as he organises his clothing and effects. The film viewers watch the businessman, M. Hulot is also watching him (*see figure 3.1*).

Figure 3.1: Waiting room scene
M. Hulot is watching the American businessman with the film audience.
Image source: Still from Play Time: PlayTime, Jacques Tati (1967) © Les Films de Mon Oncle – Specta Films CEPEC

Another way in which Tati engages directly with the viewers is the way the jokes are set out. The jokes in the film are mostly shared with the film viewers, meaning only a few characters within the film world share the jokes with the audience. In the example of M.

[32] This quote by Tati comes from an article published in *Cahiers du Cinema* September 1979 (Castel, 2019, p. 32, Vol 5).

Hulot and the businessman in the waiting room, it is only the viewers who find his overdone concern for making himself neat and presentable, amusing; M. Hulot looks on curiously, the businessman in his certainty is convinced he is behaving in the correct manner, he displays a demeanour that remains serious. Another example is when Barbara opens the glass door and sees the refection of the Eiffel Tower. In opening the door she notices the reflected image, and turns back to look for it, but there is no indication in the film that she saw the actual tower. Again, this is another joke shared with the viewer and Barbara; nobody else in modern Paris seems to notice the images of the reflected monuments.

Another way the real and fictive interact in *Play Time* is through the M. Hulot character. Film scholar Richard Combs suggests that M. Hulot, who is clearly a fictional character, experiences a "reality embarrassment" when he encounters the real (2004, p. 36). Combs discusses the notion that the "lead" female character in *Mr Hulot's Holiday* (1953), Martine, in Tati's film is a real woman, playing herself, not an actress playing a fictional character, whereas the M. Hulot character is wholly fictive. Combs believes M. Hulot is awkward in Martine's presence because there is a reality embarrassment that the M. Hulot character feels. They do not exist on the same plane, which makes the fictional M. Hulot character feel awkward in meeting his leading ladies, like Martine in *Mr Hulot's Holiday* and Barbara in *Play Time* (Combs, 2004). The M. Hulot character is almost hyper fictional, in that he does not have a given name, we do not know very much about him, we may think of him as kindly, we know the bourgeoisie do not approve of him, but not much more, when we do hear him speak it is often inaudible. M. Hulot moves in a way which is nearly impossible—his point of balance is thrown forward—the actor, Tati, moves in a way that draws our attention to the fact that this is a performance.

While I do not believe that fictional characters are embarrassed by their fictiveness, Combs's juxtaposition of the "real" women, who play Martine and Barbara, with the fictive M. Hulot raises an interesting point in that Tati chose non-actors—he could have chosen professional actors as he has done for other roles in his films—but he chose people who essentially play themselves, to play these key roles of the "leading ladies" alongside M. Hulot. This choice on the part of Tati results in a deeper connection between the real and

fictive by blurring the lines between the two. In the film the people who play Martine and Barbara are neither wholly "real" nor wholly fictive, making a space for both elements to interact, creating conversation and understanding. Film scholar Sam Rohdie explains how the fictive M. Hulot character informs the real.

> The gap between the real and its decomposition is delicate, graceful, ever so slightly detached, a comedy of light touches, observation discretion, as if the real has returned but differently, not exactly deformed or unduly exaggerated, but as refined, distilled and purified, at once abstract, absurd and affectionate. It is the person, place or object represented and the idea of it (Rohdie, 2009, p. 3).

Rohdie contends that the real exists within the fictive M. Hulot because Tati has observed the world and presented it to us—in M. Hulot we see a translation of ideas from the world around us, distilled into something that enables us to engage in a discussion—building upon the understanding of our world.

Representations are specific and contingent, meaning that caution should prevail when representations are used to understand our world and the city. In the photographic image and so the moving image, the representation of the city can possibly be thought of in some respects as stationary, that is, while the filmic representation can tell us something about the city—life moves, the city changes from one second to the next. Something of the city is captured in the film, but everything constantly shifts and changes. Furthermore, the camera has multiple views available to it, each one creating a different meaning—when using representations to study the city this must be taken into account.

The contradictions and complexities of everyday life need to be kept in consideration when analysing representations of the city, argues Rob Shields in his essay "A guide to urban representation and what to do about it: Alternative traditions to urban theory". He writes that,

> Any representation is always as much an attempt to incorporate and adjust the real, non-discursive material of everyday life, as an attempt to build an ideal discursive model outside of the plethora of disjunctures and variations… Representation is thus plagued by instability... (Shields, 1996, p. 246).

If we do take the specific and contingent nature of representation into account when considering representations of the city it seems that there is much to learn about cities from the cinema, especially when exploring the bodily experience of the city—physically, emotionally, imaginatively and rationally. The implication for the city of Paris, as depicted in *Play Time*, is that the city planners and designers have focused on the rational and not taken the complexity of human experience into account.

Film and architecture: Using film to understand the city

Cultural products are used by both the people who live in the city, and by those who only know it through these cultural products, to gain an understanding of it—a long reciprocal agreement of understanding is constantly exchanged between the lived experience of the city and cultural products such as the arts[33] and the academic works that reflect upon them. The cinema is used by filmmakers and their audiences to understand the modern city, it is also recognised that the city can be understood through other cultural products such as painting and literature. While the city symphony directly interrogates the complexity of city living, a range of cultural products—including cinema—have sought to make sense of the experience of life in the city.

The sociologist James Donald employs the work of Charles Dickens, specifically the novel *Bleak House*, to undertake his exploration of the relationship between the real and unreal, and how they interact to make up our experience and knowledge of the city (1999). The images we hold in our minds, and our experiences and memory of the city that we gain through cultural products, create our cities as much as the physical urban fabric of the city

[33] This exchange is seen in works such as those by novelists Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Victor Hugo (1802-1885), and Émile Zola (1840-1902). Similarly, in 19th century Paris paintings by artists such as Claude Monet (1840-1926), Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), and Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894), are also used to understand the city.

(Donald, 1999, p. 2). Donald maintains that narrative can bring forth the secrets of the city. He states,

> London becomes a space constituted by the possibility of the narration of its social relations. In *Bleak House*, the narrative moves beyond or behind the empirical reality of the fog and bustle to reveal a hidden reality (Donald, 1999, p. 2).

We learn things that are not in the archives from literature (Harvey, 2005). The story allows us to understand something of what it might be like to experience the city of London in the 1850s. We have greater knowledge than that found in a hospital's purchase order for a week in 1850; for example, the details this sort of information can provide are important, however, in order to gain a fuller picture of what the complex human experience of a city at any one time and place might be we require both the rational and the irrational, the information in the archives and the story in literature. What is often left out in considering the design and planning for cities is the emotional and the imaginary, the irrational—our cities and the experience of its architecture would be vastly improved if this complexity of the human experience were taken into account.

The novels of Honoré de Balzac are employed by geographer and sociologist David Harvey in his chapter, "The myths of modernity: Balzac's Paris", as a way to understand the city. In the first half of the 19th century, notes Harvey, many writers were trying to comprehend Paris but the rush of modernity—due in part to the rapid growth of the city and also communication technologies such as trains and telegraphs, implemented in the 1830s and 1840s, moving people and information between cities more rapidly—created a life which was difficult to make sense of and render (Harvey, 2003, p. 24). Harvey argues that Balzac's literature revealed the secret workings of Paris's bourgeois society, which to an extent controlled the way that all people lived in the city. Balzac's writing showed new ways of understanding the city and what the city could be. He contributed to helping the people of the city understand something of what was going on under modernisation. Importantly, Harvey notes that Balzac's work helps us understand the psychological and emotional experiences of the city, which can be lost in the "archives" as Harvey puts it (2003, p. 25).

A further example of literature, or at least poetry, providing an understanding of the urban environment can be found in Marshall Berman's book *All that is solid melts into air*. Berman uses the poem *The Eyes of the poor* (1869) by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) to demonstrate the experience of the modern city by its inhabitants during the period of Haussmannisation (1853-1870).[34] The new boulevards set the stage for the evolution of modern life (Berman, 1988, p. 150-152). He contends that it is Baudelaire who shows us, better than any other writer, that the modern city modernises its citizens (Berman, 1988, p. 147). Here the urban fabric of the city is shaping the people—their experience and ultimately who they are (Berman, 1988, p. 147).

As explored in Chapter Two, the work carried out under the administration of Haussmann included new and brightly lit boulevards, which provided a novel outdoor life for the bourgeoisie, many of which were cut through the city's poorer areas. Berman uses the poem to examine the different experiences of the rich and poor in Paris due to these massive urban transformations. While this project did demolish working-class housing, displacing the inhabitants—often to ill-equipped suburbs on the edge of Paris—behind the boulevards some working-class housing did remain, creating a sharp juxtaposition in the urban fabric between the rich and poor. In the poem, the new boulevards are affluent, still under construction, but splendid. The new cafes are brightly lit and filled with the fashionable bourgeoisie. Baudelaire describes the scene,

> The cafe glittered. The gas-lights themselves displayed all the ardor of a premiere and threw their beams on blindingly white walls, mirrors, full of dazzling tablecloths, golden mouldings and cornices,… (Baudelaire, [1869] 2009, p. 51).

Later in the poem Baudelaire continues his depiction of the new Paris,

[34] Baudelaire was born before the Haussmann works started and died towards the end of the works, as noted previously.

> Right in front of us, on the sidewalk, was a fellow, fortyish, graying beard on his tired face, holding with one hand a little boy and carrying on the other a tiny creature not yet able to walk. As nursemaid he was giving his children the evening air. All of them in tatters. The three faces were extraordinarily serious and their six eyes contemplated steadily the new café, with equal admiration, but nuanced according to age (Baudelaire, [1869] 2009, p. 51).

Berman uses the poem, as does Baudelaire, to tell us of the abhorrence of an affluent woman when confronted by a poor family who have wandered out from their crowded and damp housing, to stroll on to the new boulevards. These boulevards gained international attention and became tourist destinations in themselves.

Through Baudelaire's poem, Berman shows not only a social and economic inequality—also depicted in the film *Rien que les heures,* although 57 years later—in the experience of the city but also on the woman's part, a lack of human kindness and understanding. In using Baudelaire's poem, Berman also illustrates an experience of the city for those who were living there at the time. Furthermore, I argue that the lack of understanding for the plight of others could possibly have played a role in the massive urban transformations Paris saw in the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries. Decisions regarding the urban environment are made by people in positions of power, such as Napoleon III (1808-1873), and the political forces, explored in the next chapter, responsible for the second rapid urban transformation of Paris in the period after World War II. In both periods, the people in power either did not care about people or did not know how people lived, beyond their own social class.[35] A homogeneous group, in this case mostly white, middle class men, make the decisions about the city for everyone—these people are depicted in *Play Time*, in the boardroom meeting that M. Hulot inadvertently interrupts.[36] The lack of consideration is part of the reason for Baudelaire writing the poem and for Berman to include the poem in

[35] The experience of which can be read in the film *2 or 3 things I know about her* (1966) by Jean-Luc Godard, which in part at least addresses the experience of moving people out of the centre of Paris and into the social housing of the grand ensembles.

[36] While *Play Time* was made over 50 years ago, the decision makers around the table today still often lack a diversity that reflects the city they are making urban decisions about.

his exploration of the modern city of Paris—urban decisions do not consider all the citizens but only, or mostly, are for the benefit of the ruling classes to support the capitalist economy.

Paintings of cities reveal connections, secrets, emotions, and bodily understanding of a city which formal documents such as those in the archives do not convey, as Berman, Harvey and Donald demonstrate above. Like literature, paintings are used to understand the city of Paris and to create a common point on which the inhabitants recognise a shared view of the city. T. J. Clark, in *The painting of modern life: Paris in the art of Manet and his followers,* shows how paintings can be used to understand hard to grasp elements, hard to pin down ideas that interweave the rational, the irrational, the emotional and the physicality of the city. Clark uses ideas of class, ideology, and spectacle, which are all interwoven, to explore the paintings addressed in his book. These three elements play a role in what it is to be modern, however, Clark argues, at the time people did not necessarily think of themselves as modern. It was not until all three ideas—class, ideology and spectacle—found their way into Impressionist paintings that people begin to recognise themselves as modern. Clark writes, "…I wish to show that the circumstances of modernism were not modern, and only became so by given the forms called 'spectacle'" (1999, p. 9). The paintings reflected the modern life of the city back to the people and allowed them to acknowledge and discuss their lives and experiences.

In discussing the relationship between the people and Paris, and their experience of the modern city through painting, the art historian Rosanne H. Lightstone, when considering the painting, *Le Pont de l'Europe* (1876) by Gustave Caillebotte, writes that,

> [The painting] ... articulates the physical and psychological immensity of Haussmann's changes and the extent to which they transformed the lives of all Parisians, conveying the uncertainties and contradictions that are the conditions of modernity (Lightstone, 1994, p. 762).

She considers how the experience of the turmoil of the urban transformations is shown in Caillebotte's painting. Lightstone argues that Caillebotte achieves the connection between the painting and the people of Paris not only through the content and context of the painting—people juxtaposed against the industrial railway bridge—but also in the expression of the "physical and psychological immensity" (1994, p. 762), as found in the particular brushwork, the harsh lighting and limited detail of the painting.

The story in literature and painting, among other cultural products, plays a role in continuously developing an understanding of the city through key cultural practices in different periods. The work of authors such as Harvey, Berman and Donald on literature and Clark and Lightstone on painting provides something of what the experience of Paris may have been for the people who were living there during the urban transformation of Paris in the second half of 19th century. In the late 1800s the cinema, at its birth, began to play a role in this contribution to understanding the city too.

There is a long relationship between architecture and film. This relationship, which can inform our understanding of the city, has been investigated in various ways including: using set design as a "laboratory of exploration of the built world" (Vidler, 1996, p. 13); the idea that both architecture and the cinema are perceived in a mode of distraction (Benjamin, 1992); that the image one has of the city, in the mind, ends up closely interacting with filmic representations (Bruno, 1997); the idea that films reflect life in cities, which in turn tells us something about cities (Siegel, 2003); that the lived experience of the city through the cinema can provide an understanding of what a space is beyond, plan, sections and elevations, for example (Pallasmaa, 2001); and that cinema can provide a shared experience for the inhabitants of a city (Rifkin, 1995). The relationship between cinema and the city has also been used to explore, in the case of New York, the actual city and the filmic city—how people "know" a city via the cinema (Sanders, 2001); conversely the idea that representations of a particular city, Los Angeles for example, can make that city vanish in the minds of a cinema going audience, has been explored by Thom Anderson in his documentary *Los Angeles plays itself* (2003).

The image of the city closely interacts with its filmic representations, argues the scholar of film and architecture, Giuliana Bruno (1997, p. 2). In this case, she is referring to images of the city which may include drawings—plans, sections, elevations, perspectives—postcards, maps, holiday snaps, paintings and the image in the mind. Bruno notes that Sergei Eisenstein believed we experienced both the city and the cinema as a montage from multiple points of view (Bruno, 1997, p. 4).

The cinema has had a role in shaping our thoughts regarding the urban environment since its beginning, argues author Allan Siegel. He writes, "...during the twentieth century, the cinema .... became a primary means of cultural expression for representing the realities of urban life" (2003, p. 137). This engagement with the cinema contributes to our understanding of the city. Film can be a metaphorical canvas (Siegel, 2003, p. 137). That is, the architectural environment can reflect the character's experience of the world—for example, a harsh architectural environment which is pictured as isolating and cold may be used to express something about the main character's experience of the world. Siegel notes that architecture in film can also be a figurative backdrop (2003, p. 137). He states that the meaning embodied within the architecture works with the filmic images to create a single unit of meaning.

Walter Benjamin, in his famous essay "Art Work in the age of mechanical reproduction", argues that architecture and cinema are both taken in by the masses in a mode of distracted participation. He also reasons that both cinema and architecture are viewed collectively, unlike a painting, for example (Benjamin, 1992, p. 228), and that the movie camera enables things not seen before, in the city and elsewhere, to be seen via the cinematic techniques of the close-up and slow motion (Benjamin, 1992, p. 229). To return to Benjamin's idea that both architecture and the cinema are perceived in a mode of "distracted participation"—the example Benjamin gives is a man concentrating before a painting. The man is absorbed by the painting, conversely, in the cinema—it is the film that absorbs the masses. The man is absorbed by the work of art—the man is concentrating. The new work of art, the cinema, absorbs the masses—the masses watch absent-mindedly. Benjamin writes, "The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one" (Benjamin, 1992, p.

234). There is possibly a problem in Benjamin's argument, I believe, in that for the example of the painting he uses one individual, and for the cinema he uses the masses, a crowd of people—he uses two different things to make the comparison between the old art form and the new art form of the cinema. It could suggest that people do not watch the cinema as individuals. However, Benjamin goes on to argue in this piece that the cinema could be used by the collective—the masses—to understand modern life.

Adrian Rifkin contends that not only do films, songs and the work of writers like Benjamin shape our image of Paris from a distance (historically), they also play a role in the experience of Paris for the people who lived there at the time. Rifkin reasons that both Walter Benjamin, through his work on Charles Baudelaire, and Jacques Prévert, in writing the film script for Marcel Carne's *Children of Paradise* (1945), provide images of Paris, through the working classes and especially the rag picker. These works play a role in creating an image of Paris, one that not only shapes our ideas of Paris historically, but shapes an image of the city for the people who were living there at the time Benjamin's text and *Children of Paradise* were created, in the 1930s and 1940s.

Rifkin argues that *Children of Paradise* relates to the present—when the film was made in the early 1940s—by "romanticizing" the poor, the working class and the criminal class, by picturing their story in a faithful reproduction of 1820s to 1840s Paris, the time in which the film is set. This combination unites all the people of Paris, in the 1940s when the film was released, argues Rifkin, because it makes them all ignore their unrecognisable class differences and the complex and harsh situation with regard to the Nazi occupation. Rifkin argues that *Children of Paradise* broke a silence that the Nazis tried to enforce upon the city—the film brought Parisians together through stories being told to them about them.

How the film connects to the present of 1940s Paris, Rifkin contends, is through Garance, the female lead character, when she refers to Menilmontant, an area of Paris. The film shows us the lights of Menilmontant, however in the 1820s to the 1840s, when the film is set, Menilmontant did not have the dense urban fabric suggested in the film; there would not have been so many lights, if any. In the 1840s Menilmontant was still outside the city

walls. However, in the 1930s Menilmontant played a big part in people's minds and hearts, and the film by tapping into this created a common point for all Parisians, at a time when they were under threat due to the city being occupied (Rifkin, 1995). Rifkin's work shows how various texts, films, and written theory, for example, shape images in our mind which in turn play a role in how we experience a city, how we live and how we think.

Another city, like Paris, that has had a major movie industry, and a significant amount of films made about it, is New York. While Paris may be the "capital of modernity" (Harvey, 2005),[37] New York is another city that found itself as a centre of modern activity. The architect James Sanders argues that there are two New Yorks. The material one on the ground that we can all visit, and "movie New York", the one created by all the accumulated moving images of New York that we have seen at the cinema—Sanders argues that both are equally valid in our experience (2001). Each of these two New Yorks are clearly different but have crossing points at which common references are shared. Sanders writes that,

> ...this imperative to connect space, story, and character makes the movie city an incomparable resource to explore the complex web of linkages—physical, emotional, imaginary—between urban environments and those who live in them (2001, p. 10).

"Movie New York" can provide an understanding of the material New York. Films can reveal the "physical, emotional and imaginary" understandings of the world which are vital elements of city life but difficult to convey in rational texts such as planning applications or urban planning strategies.

Los Angeles, unlike New York, is often used anonymously—it stands in for any western city—and this is what the documentary *Los Angeles plays itself* (2003), by Thom Anderson, argues. For Anderson, Los Angeles is home, yet the way Los Angeles is depicted in the majority of Hollywood it is as if it does not exist. Anderson puts forward that Hollywood, in its use of Los Angeles, makes it vanish. This particular film is perhaps not used to understand the city but shows a converse example, proving the point of the New York

[37] The full title of David Harvey's book is *Paris: Capital of Modernity*.

example put forward by James Sanders. Jacques Tati's film *Play Time* is emphatically about home, the city as home, as in the word "hometown". In *Play Time* the fiction film builds a connection to the real city, speaks directly to its citizens, and acts as a forewarning for other cities globally. In the case of Los Angeles, Anderson argues that fiction films sever the connection with the real city.

The cinema permits emotion and thought, as well as, to a point, a physical understanding of architecture and the city, argues architect, Juhani Pallasmaa. He states, "Houses are built in the world of Euclidian geometry, but lived space always transcends the rules of geometry" (2000, p. 18). Cinema can help provide an emotional and experiential understanding of architecture that plans, sections and elevations often do not allow. Pallasmaa maintains that both the cinema and architecture create images in the mind, and we use the images of both, not only to understand architecture but also our lives. "We do not live separately in material and mental worlds; these experiential dimensions are fully intertwined" (2000, p. 18). Pallasmaa continues,

> The fact that images of architecture are eternalized in matter, whereas cinematic images are only an illusion projected on the screen, has no decisive significance. Both art forms define frames of life, situations of human interaction and horizons of understanding the world (2000, p. 18).

Pallasmaa states that for Benjamin both architecture and film are tactile arts, bodily experiences. He writes

> ...the illusory cinematic space gives the viewer back his/her body, as the experiential haptic and motor space provides powerful kinesthetic experiences. A film is viewed with the muscles and skin as much as by the eyes (2001, p.18).

Pallasmaa argues that cinema can help us understand architecture and the city, not just at the level of ideas, but with the whole being—emotionally, psychologically, and physically. Through film to some degree we find ourselves experiencing physically something about the

space that is viewed, creating a connection between viewer and film, and building upon our understanding of the city.

Matthew Taunton's book *Fictions of the city: class, culture and mass housing in London and Paris* argues that the home is vital in understanding the experience of the city and that in literature and film representations of the city the home has been overlooked, in lieu of public spaces and boulevards, for example. Taunton's discussion on the home explores the interrelationships of the ideas of Paris as home, Paris as a tourist destination, and Paris as a city which can only be experienced through the image, for people who never visit the city but know it through images. Both *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* emphasise the importance and connection between the interior of the home and streets where it is located.

How modern architecture entered the popular mind via Hollywood movies

How ideas get transferred from avant-garde to the general public via set design in the cinema, and photography, has been examined by various authors (Albrecht, 1986; Becherer, 1981; Bergfelder, Harris and Street, 2007). The modern architecture of the 1920s and 1930s was designed predominantly for an elite wealthy clientele. At the time, most people could not afford to live in houses designed by modern architects. Modern architecture did make its way into the popular imagination though, creating a common reference point. One way in which modern architecture was brought to the popular imagination was via the cinema. This is what the modern architect and contemporary of Le Corbusier, Robert Mallet-Stevens, proposed and firmly believed was possible in the early 1920s (Becherer, 1981, 53-54; Bergfelder, 2007, p. 58). Modern architecture made it into the movies via architects gaining work as set designers, as in the case of Robert Mallet-Stevens himself who designed the exterior sets of the modern house in Marcel L'Herbier's film of 1924 *L'Inhumaine*.

Donald Albrecht argues that modern architecture was brought to the population at large by the cinema—at least to those who watched Hollywood films in the 1930s (1986). One way of this knowledge transmission was in movie makers attending significant public events concerning modern architecture, such as international exhibitions, and then taking

the ideas back with them to the studios. Albrecht states that at first the modern architects, in the early 1920s, shared their ideas via manifestos, journals, books, photography, the buildings themselves and eventually magazines (Albrecht, 1986, p. 4). Albrecht notes that the most effective way of sharing these ideas was at international exhibitions, especially those of 1925 (Paris), 1927 (Germany), 1932 (New York)[38], 1933-34 (Chicago), and 1939-40 (New York).

In the context of the international exhibitions, leading modern architects such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Robert Mallet-Stevens presented their designs in the built form. Albrecht suggests that at the exhibitions not only the general public, but also movie makers, came to see the new architecture. They became a potent influence in the creation of set designs (Albrecht, 1986, p. 5). The movie makers went to exhibitions and reinterpreted what they saw into designs which they used to tell their filmic stories. We attach associations to the images we see in films, from our own experiences—at crossing points the real and fictive fuse—we know this because, for the most part, the films make sense to the film viewer.

A specific example of the design ideas of modern architecture moving from the exhibition to the cinema is Cedric Gibbon, who worked in the art department at MGM. The film scholar Lea Jacobs states that Gibbon went to the 1925 Paris Exhibition[39] and when he returned to Hollywood he then used modern architectural design in the movie trilogy *Our Dancing Daughters* (1928), *Our Modern Maidens* (1929), and *Our Blushing Brides* (1930) (Jacobs, 1995, p. 52). In Jacobs's chapter she argues that glamour was associated with the fallen woman in gold digger films of the 1920s and 30s. The modern architecture in the sets, and other forms which reflected modern design such as clothes and jewellery, represented glamour. Modern design equalled glamour which equalled the fallen woman. The "good" woman was represented by children, domesticity, and the ordinary (Jacobs, 1995). In this example we can see that for the general public, many of whom went to the movies, modern

[38] International architecture expo at MOMA.
[39] The exhibition was called *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* (International exhibition of modern decorative and industrial arts).

architecture was mostly only available to the very wealthy, and for nearly everyone else it was experienced through the movies. It was not until the post-world War II period that modern architecture began to be ubiquitous in western countries. In the following section of this chapter the city symphony film genre, and three films set in Paris, are compared to demonstrate how film conveys ideas about the city.

Paris, *Rien que les heures* (1926), *Chronicle of a summer* (1960), *Play Time* (1967) and the city symphony film genre

City symphonies were first made during the 1920s, but are still being made today, films such as *Of Time and the City* (2008) by Terence Davies about Liverpool, *I Am Belfast* (2015) and *Stockholm My Love* (2017) by Mark Cousins are contemporary examples. This chapter as noted above will focus on one city symphony film in particular, "*Rien que les heures*" (*Nothing but time)* by Alberto Cavalcanti, made in 1926 and filmed in Paris.[40] Other city symphony films of the 1920s and 1930s include *Berlin: Symphony of a City* (1927) directed by Walter Ruttmann; *Man with a movie camera* (1929) by Dziga Vertov, filmed in several Russian cities; *Manhatta* (1921) filmed in New York by Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler; *A Propos de Nice* (1930) by Jean Vigo; and *Regen* (1929) by Mannus Franken and Joris Ivens, filmed in Amsterdam.

The city symphony films of the 1920s and 1930s were about representing the modern city and the experience of modern life. These films capture the rhythm of the city to convey the experience of fast-paced modern city life (Toles, 2015, p. 44). The films do this through techniques such as montage, oblique camera angles, and double exposures. The films feature montages of different aspects of the city; common themes seen in many of the films include public and private transport, trains, trams, buses, and cars, as well as pedestrians quickly interweaving between the traffic. Crowded footpaths in constant movement is another theme of a city symphony montage sequence, as are visions of rooftops of densely packed urban buildings. Montages of heavy industry and people working on production lines

[40] Other urban realism films made in Paris include: *Paris* (1924) by René Hervil, *Ménilmontant* (1926) by Dmitri Kirsanoff, *Ménilmontant* (1927) by Dmitri Kirsanoff, *Études sur Paris* (1928) by André Sauvage, *La Zone* (1928) by Georges Lacombe and *L'amour existe* (1960) by Maurice Pialat.

are also seen in this genre. In these films the city is always busy, active, moving. The films do not have strong narratives but instead use elements of the aforementioned filmic devices to convey their meaning. As Toles observes,

> Rather than telling stories, Vertov and Ruttman [film directors] toyed with visual patterns and tempos to mimic the experience of city life. An 'overriding concern' of these city symphonies, Alexander Graf states, was to create a 'representation of the pace and rhythm of urban life […] through editing techniques' (2014: 79) (Toles, 2015, p. 44).

These films do not have the traditional narratives found in popular films of the time such as Buster Keaton's *Stream Boat Bill Jr* (1928) or King Vidor's *The Crowd* (1928). Instead, directors use the rhythm of night and day to structure the film, and montage sequences to highlight various aspects of the modern city.[41]

The original city symphony films were created as a way of getting back to the "reality" said to be found in the actualities of the early cinema (Marcus, 2010, p. 30).

> The avant-garde city films of the 1920s show the influence of early urban panoramic films and city actualities. They are part of the complex history whereby film-makers in the 1920s sought to renew the medium – and to turn away from commercial and narrative cinema – by returning to cinema's origins in the documenting of reality, but with the particular twist given by the perspectives and angles of Modernism (Marcus, 2010, p. 30).

The actualities is a term given to the early films such as those by the Lumiere Brothers, *Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory* (1895) and *A train arrives at La Ciotat station* (1895), for example. A camera would be taken out into the street and other public places and film

[41] The city symphonies of the 1920s and 1930s are usually silent, even though some of them were made in the sound era, that is, the films do not use synchronised sound—the film viewer does not hear people speaking or the actual sounds of the street, for example, the films instead tend to use musical sound tracks.

what was happening. Like the city symphonies, the actualities are without a traditional narrative. These early films were usually unedited, unlike the city symphonies, where their editing techniques help to define them. Unlike the actualities, some city symphonies, such as *Rien Que Les Heures*, also used both fictive and "real" filmic elements to create their representation of modern life in the city.[42]

In the following section three films will be examined, *Rien que les heures* (*Nothing but time*) (1926), *Chronicle of a summer* (1960) and the film that is the subject of this thesis, *Play Time*. All three are filmed in, or set in, Paris. *Rien que les heures* and *Chronicle of a summer* are non-fiction films, *Play Time* is a fiction film—however all three films use the real and fictive to convey meaning. Unlike many city symphonies *Rien que les heures* uses the real, and it uses the fictive explicitly—that is, the film uses actual footage of the city, and it uses fictional sequences, played by professional actors. *Chronicle of a Summer* (1960), directed by filmmaker Jean Rouch and sociologist Edgar Morin, is a documentary film, an ethnographic film. It uses actual footage, although at times some of the action is staged.[43] However, this documentary film, about the real lives of Parisians, constantly questions whether what is presented on the screen is reality.

Play Time is a fictional film with a constructed set that presents modern Paris. Tati's film œuvre documents something of the real-life experience of the transformation of France when it was rapidly modernising in the post-war period. Despite its being a fiction film it tells us something about how we live. Rouch's documentary films address elements of life, but he also uses dreams and fantasies in his documentary films, things that are not wholly rational but are still parts of our "real" and complex being. There are crossing points in all three of

[42] Some have argued that the city symphonies create machine-like people. "…the production of the city as a subject simultaneously reduces the citizenry to part of the rhythmic machine the city comes to resemble (Grierson 106)" (Stein, 2013, p. 3).

[43] Angelo wakening in the morning is an example of staged action in real locations. Angelo is one of the key people who appears throughout the film. In a morning sequence the film viewer sees footage of him waking and getting dressed. This sequence was staged, presumably, as he firstly let the camera people into to his room at one point, and secondly it is unlikely they were sitting there all night waiting for him to wake up.

these films, if not all films, between the real and fictive, between the imaginary and somatic, between the rational and irrational.

These three films were made in periods which are significant in the history of modern architecture. *Rien que les heures* was made in the midst of the rhapsodic activity of the modern architecture movement—and of other disciplines within the modern avant-garde, such as film, painting, and literature—that took place in the 1920s and 1930s. The architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner states that the ideas regarding architecture developed in the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century radically transformed the way architecture and cities were designed and built (1990, p. 404).[44] The work in this pre-World War II period by modern architects, and by the scholars of modern architecture, was hugely influential. Moreover, and more significantly for the general public in the post-war period, it changed the way we live within our buildings, and within the city they help to create. *Chronicle of a summer* and *Play Time* document something of this experience.

All three films investigate how people live in Paris on both an urban and architectural scale. Common elements that these films have with each other are: depiction of the working and upper classes; work and leisure time; the rhythm of the day; domestic spaces; representations of the streets of Paris; and an engagement with both the real and the fictive. The depiction of the domestic spaces illustrates the connectivity between life lived inside buildings and the contribution to the city the exterior of the building creates. These elements are often separated when considering architecture and urbanism, when the two are clearly related. Architecture plays a role in creating both urban life and the interior lives inside buildings.

These films use key characters who are used to structure the film. In the case of *Rien que les heures* and *Play Time* the film viewers never really get to know the characters, since they appear more as types, such as "Old Woman" in *Rien Que Les Heures*, for example, or Barbara, the American tourist in *Play Time*. In *Chronicle of a Summer*, the film viewers

[44] Pevsner refers to this work undertaken by architects at this time as "a greater revolution than any since the Renaissance had replaced Gothic forms and principles five hundred years before…" (Pevsner, 1990, p. 404).

famously get to know something more about key figures in the film; the film asks questions such as "Are you happy?" and "How do you live?", revealing personal responses. We hear stories of Holocaust survival, stories of mind-numbingly boring jobs in the Renault car factory, where the staff are constantly bullied, and stories of loneliness. Interestingly, the story of loneliness brings the most embarrassment, to some but not all of the participants, in the film.[45] Perhaps it is more private, while knowledge of the other two issues is spoken of in the public realm. Questions of loneliness and soul destroying work are also addressed in *Rien Que Les Heures*, but are shown only in the images of the film rather than spoken of by the characters. *Play Time* is about the modern city creating an inhuman environment. I argue that the filthy city and wretched poverty depicted in *Rien que les heures* in 1926, left over from the 19th century—which many, including architects and hygienists aimed to rectify by providing clean homes and city streets—has in the modern city of *Play Time* been taken too far, the modern citizens have a clean city and domestic arrangements, but it is an antiseptic environment that has extinguished most of the plant and animal life, and almost all of the messy yet necessary aspects of human life.

Rien que les heures and Play Time

This section focuses on *Rien que les heures* (*Nothing but time*) (1926) by Cavalcanti. The following is not only a comparison between the films *Play Time* and *Rien que les heures,* but through this film from the 1920s something of the context of Tati's experience of Paris at this time is provided. Only the year before *Rien que les heures* was made, Le Corbusier presented his ground-breaking and controversial Pavilion of the New Spirit at the 1925 Paris Exhibition.[46] The Pavilion was a life-sized prototype for an apartment—designed to facilitate a new way of living. Its straight lines and cleanliness form a striking contrast to much of Paris and its architecture seen in *Rien que les heures.* On the wall of the Pavilion hung the *Voisin Plan*, which proposed demolishing much of the Right Bank of Paris, and this is explored further in the following chapter. *Rien que les heures* depicts the types of streets and at times quite possibly the streets that the young Tati walked through, so in this film the viewer sees

[45] *Chronicle of a summer* was screened to the participants, in turn their reactions and thoughts were recorded and are included in the version of film that was released.

[46] "*Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes"* (International exhibition of modern decorative and industrial arts).

something of the Paris he laments losing—*Play Time* expresses this loss. The film *Rien que les heures* does not depict Tati walking through the Paris streets, but the film viewer can see elements of the city that Tati's eyes would have seen, and his feet would have touched in 1926. *Rien que les heures* brings to life something of the world Tati knew, in a way that photographs, stories, drawings and paintings do not. The film depicts people in motion, it brings them closer than a photograph stopped in time. Interestingly *Rien que les heures* addresses this topic. It puts forward that film is better able to express the experience of the city. The film viewer is shown a montage sequence of paintings of Paris. The film's intertitle reads "Only a succession of images can bring the city to life", suggesting that only the cinema can be used in the understanding the city; paintings have become redundant. This is quite a strong statement on the part of the director, and similar to the emphatic certainty found in Le Corbusier books such as *Towards a new architecture,* first published in 1924 and *The city of tomorrow and its planning,* first published in 1929. I am in agreement with Cavalcanti, to a point; I too maintain that film brings the city to life in a way that than the older arts such as literature and painting are unable to, however the older arts do still contribute to our understanding of the city, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

These two films depict Paris monuments. In *Rien que les heures* the intertitle suggests that monuments identify a city, which to some extent is true at least in terms of how cities are represented locally, nationally and internationally, as symbols to identify that city and for its citizens to identify with. *Play Time* also uses images and symbols of Paris monuments to indicate that this is Paris, however in *Play Time*, as will be examined further in Chapter Five, the reflections of the monuments are used as a point of loss, as images of the memory of what has been lost and to show that the old city has been devalued as a physical object, and relegated to the image.

Play Time in many ways belongs to a genre like the city symphonies, in tandem with *Rien Que Les Heures*; both address the experience of urban modernity, both employ non-traditional narratives, and both blur document and fiction to convey the directors' thinking about the city. In lieu of a strong narrative, both use the rhythm of the sun to structure their films, they start in the morning with the working day and end in the evening with leisure

time. The depiction of the daily activities brings us through the film in the way story events do in a film with a more traditional narrative. Both films also use central characters or figures to bring the viewer through the film. In *Rien que les heures* these characters are the old woman, the prostitute, the pimp, the sailor and the newspaper girl. In *Play Time* the characters M. Hulot, the American tourists and various other recurring characters, such as M. Giffard, are used for the same function.

Rien que les heures differs from other city symphony films, in that it does not celebrate the elements of the modern city that other city symphony films venerate, such as the busy commercial streets, bustling crowds and motorised traffic (Werth, 2013, p. 1028). Art historian Margaret Werth also argues that *Rien que les heures* differs from fiction films such as *L'Inhumaine* (1924) directed by Marcel L'Herbier, which celebrates "modernity, wealth and technology" (2013, p. 1028). Cavalcanti, who had studied architecture, worked on *L'Inhumaine* along with the painter Fernand Léger and the modern architect, Robert Mallet-Stevens (Werth, 2013, p. 1028). These professional connections illustrate Cavalcanti's knowledge of modern architecture and the modern avant-garde, in turn informing the creation of his film. *L'Inhumaine* champions modern architecture and decries the state of old Paris. Cavalcanti would have been aware of these arguments. The fiction film celebrates modernity. Cavalcanti's film does not celebrate the wealth that is required to access the modern—he is, perhaps, not so much against modernity and modernisation, but against the disparity between the wealthy and poor; his film illustrates that the poor do not have access to the modern.

In a sequence near the start of the film there is a group of fashionably well-dressed young women standing on a palatial flight of stairs; as they greet a friend, the moving image freezes and becomes a still photograph which is then torn into pieces and allowed to fall to the ground. *Rien que les heures* presents the wretched poverty and run-down buildings that many Parisians lived in, in 1926 (*see figure 3.2*). In this film the suffering of the poorer classes is shown explicitly. In *Play Time* it is shown implicitly. The film does not show people living in poverty, however, undoubtedly in the 1960s there was poverty in France (see *Figure 3.3*). *Play Time* demonstrates this poverty through an absence—the desperately poor are

not seen in the modern city depicted in the film. The poor live beyond the city boundary and remain unseen. The film, however, does illustrate a difference between the bourgeoisie and the working classes, not only in their appearance and behaviour but also in where they live.[47] The film shows that the working classes do not belong in modern Paris—they live outside the city, and are only allowed into the city as and when the bourgeoisie need them. They are only in the city temporarily, for work purposes, and leave the city at night.[48]

The tearing up of the photograph of affluence, indicating power, at the start of *Rien des que heures,* and the destruction of the modern corporate bourgeois architecture in the Royal garden scene in *Play Time* draws a similarity. The privileged lives and homogeneity of the bourgeoisie does not create a city that is inclusive of everyone, it creates a city where diversity is denied, a city where outsiders, like M. Hulot, have little chance of succeeding in the way that they choose—although as the film viewer knows it turns out differently for M. Hulot, he breaks the power which is embedded in the modern architecture; this theme is addressed in detail in Chapter Six.

Figure 3.2: Rien que les heures Paris street in 1926, the still depicts a narrow rundown street with windows and entrance doorways facing on to it. There is an abundant amount of what appears to be water lying in the street. Image source: Still from Rien que les heures (Nothing but time) Neo-Films (1926)

[47] In the post war period the "*jeune cadres"* (young executives) emerged in large numbers. They were "Midway between owner and worker, managing the proletariat but punching a time clock too…" (Ross, 1995, p. 7). The "*cadres"* are not strictly bourgeois because traditionally the bourgeoisie had their own capital, but these executives are middle class none the less.

[48] This is much like many of the workers in the city state of Monaco.

Figure 3.3: Shanty town in foreground with the CNIT building at La Defence in the background
The CNIT building was constructed between 1957 and 1958, 'Centre des nouvelles industries et technologies' (Centre of New Industries and Technologies).
Image source: http://urbanplanet.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/CNIT-after-construction-636x310.jpg

Rien que les heures addresses poverty in the city. It does this by juxtaposing affluent aspects of the city with poorer ones. The film shows run-down buildings and sunless courtyards where the poor live, the buildings and streets appear to be covered in grime. The film demonstrates the crippling poverty of the domestic lives people lived by showing a bedroom and kitchen. There are images of industrial machinery and the homeless—people sleeping outside, along the quay sides, and men washing in the river what appears to be their only shirt. The film viewer is shown workers such as the washer women who toil in their dark, dingy and ill-kept places of employment. These images of poverty are juxtaposed with sequences such as wealthy people in evening dress stepping out of luxury vehicles. There is even a multiscreen montage which puts many images of affluence on the one screen at the same time. This sequence depicts a puppy drinking from a baby's bottle, wealthy couples at leisure and the aforementioned motorised traffic. The film uses themes, such as food and eating, and figures such as the ragpicker and the old and sickly, to depict this juxtaposition of the rich and poor in Paris.

Near the beginning of *Rien que les heures,* a chauffeur-driven car is superimposed with an image of a rag picker with his very thin donkey and cart. These images illustrate the juxtaposition between the wealthy and impoverished. The building behind the car and then the cart, is one of the new modern buildings of this time, the expensive looking modern car

and house show an affluence and way of life not available to the rag picker. To be modern at this time was to be wealthy. The financial distance between the ragpicker and the owner of the modern house and car is vast. The superimposition of these two images, the car and the cart, illustrate the distance between the rich and poor (*see figures 3.4 and 3.5*). *Rien que les heures* continues this depiction of poverty throughout the film.

Figure 3.4: Rien que les heures depicts a modern house and car, Paris 1926.
Image source: Still from Rien que les heures (Nothing but time) Neo-Films (1926)

Figure 3.5: Rien que les heures, this still depicts the same modern house as the pervious shot but the expensive car has been replaced, via a dissolve, with a rag picker, his cart, and the thin donkey which pulls it, Paris 1926.
Image source: Still from Rien que les heures (Nothing but time) Neo-Films (1926)

Rien que les heures uses film footage of the actual streets and public places in Paris, but it also has narrative sequences played by actors. Another juxtaposition of the rich and poor, which also incorporates the real and fictive, is a staged sequence where a wealthy man has come to a restaurant named *Lasserre*.[49] He is seen eating a large steak, the size of the plate. As he eats the centre of the plate dissolves and is replaced with an image of cattle being slaughtered and butchered at an outdoor abattoir. The footage in the abattoir appears to be un-staged. The men at work in the abattoir, butchering the cattle for him to eat, are unlikely to be able to afford a steak, especially one the size of a dinner plate, and not in an expensive restaurant. This sequence in the restaurant is also contrasted with a man sitting at the edge of a pavement eating what appears to be a chunk of bread and some cheese. The film shows not only the difference in the actual food that people eat, but also the circumstances in which it is eaten; one man sits at a table with linen and cutlery, while the other sits on a footpath gutter with only his teeth to cut the bread. Food is referred to throughout the film and used to illustrate the disparity in wealth between the city's citizens. The viewer sees images involving the above-mentioned steak, and images of freshly cooked food. Pictures of fruit and vegetables, in large holding baskets at market stalls, are intercut with overflowing metal rubbish cans. At another time in the film the viewer sees rats, not scurrying and hiding, but calmly eating food scraps they have found. Perhaps the film is saying many people in Paris do not eat much better than rats.

The real and fictive are also combined in the sequences involving the character of the old woman. She is seen repeatedly through the film, walking, stumbling and finally crawling. She is last seen in what maybe her final refuge. These scenes are harrowing. The viewer is introduced to her via an intertitle that states "Wandering, an old woman". She is wearing ragged clothes, the film viewer sees her from above, but slightly to one side, she is walking through one of Paris's typical old narrow streets, too narrow for a car to drive through. The next time she appears is in a similar narrow street, but this time shot directly from above. Here the viewer can see that the central drain of the street runs with water, or possibly sewage. Later, in a less densely built part of the city, but one which is run down and is incredibly dirty, the film viewers sees her as she makes her way down the uneven and damp

[49] There is a gourmet restaurant today in Paris also called *Lasserre* which was established in 1945.

surface of a hilly lane. She needs to use the broken-down fence and buildings on each side of the lane to hold her sickly body up as she moves along. She is not only desperately poor but also very unwell. Later again she seen stumbling, then crawling across a construction site, she drags herself into the shade, and lies flat on the ground. The last time we see her, she is sat upon the ground, there is a close-up—her unkempt hair has fallen across her face, as she sways back and forth. Here the film uses the character of the old woman, played by an actress, to illustrate something of the real experience of the Parisian poor in the mid-1920s.

Tati was aged 17 when *Rien que les heures* was made and he would have walked through some of the streets that appear in the film, or streets similar to them. *Rien que les heures* depicts the Paris that the modern architects were aiming to reform in order to create better living environments for the people who lived there. Depicted are the airless, dirty streets the modern architects were aiming to get light and sunshine into. *Rien que les heures* shows "all the junk" that Le Corbusier is hoping to cart away in his Voisin Plan which was hanging on the garage wall in the Pavilion of the New Spirit at the 1925 Paris exhibition. The modern urban and architectural ideas developed in the first half of the 20th century had a significant impact on Paris in the post-war period. That in *Play Time* Paris is a constructed set is no small matter because all that is important to Tati about Paris has disappeared. Tati's first three feature films are shot in actual locations, and the locals or holiday visitors of those locations, as well as professional actors, appear in the films. *Play Time* itself is not a documentary film but reflects upon the real, as all film to some extent must; this is a fiction film about real events that affect real lives, including Tati's.

Play Time and Chronicle of a Summer

The fiction films of Jacques Tati and the documentary films of Jean Rouch share some common ground. Jean Rouch was a French ethnographic filmmaker who produced films from the late 1940s to the early 200Os. In 1960 he and the sociologist Edgar Morin made the ground-breaking film *Chronicle of a Summer*, which is about Paris and how people lived within it. While substantially a documentary filmmaker, Rouch used elements of fiction in his films. He also made at least one fiction film set in Paris, called *Gare du Nord* (1966), about the modernising city and its people, which is addressed below.

Rouch was hugely influenced by Dziga Vertov, the Russian director of one of the most famous city symphony films, *Man with a movie camera.* The cultural anthropologist Paul Stoller states that Vertov was one of the cinematic spiritual fathers of Rouch (Stoller, 1992, p. 100). What Rouch learnt from Vertov was "cinematic truth" (Stoller, 1992, p. 102). This means using the camera and film to bring about a conversation regarding the truths of life, or one's experiences of life. Tati's *Play Time* also does this but uses the fictive to discuss the real. Peter Loizos, author and documentary filmmaker, writes that *Chronicle of a summer* moves away from the "naïve empiricist idea that the camera records the truth" (Loizos, 1993, p. 56), but he argues that "cinematic-truth" is still getting at a kind of truth. It still tells us something about our lived experience, we just need to keep in mind the subjective, as opposed to the objective, nature of "cinematic-truth".

Rouch brings a participatory method to his film work, an approach to documentary which includes the subjects of the film in the film making process.[50] Significantly, Paul Stoller states that Rouch's films also filled the gaps that "plain style" created—this is a type of scientific writing that anthropologists used, which produced "bloodless words" and "… reduce[d] the complexity of the world to simple structures" (1992, p. 203). Stoller writes that,

> The straight lines of the text shape anthropological discourse, moulding a variety of right-angled structures. These precise constructions create fine-tuned order out of out of the chaotic disorder of social life (Stoller, 1992, p. 203).

Play Time brings "blood words" to the understanding of the post-World War II modernisation of Paris. Loizos in discussing Rouch's use of dream and fantasy sequences in his documentary films, writes that "…since people have fantasies and dreams why not include these in a film that is trying to get more deeply and intimately into their lives"

[50] For Stoller, Rouch's other cinematic spiritual father was the filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty, director of the ground-breaking documentary film *Nanook of the North* (1922) (Stoller, 1992, p. 99). Stoller tells us that what Rouch learnt from Flaherty was participatory cinema—having the people that the film is about also participating in making the film—as opposed to standing at a distance, creating a hierarchy between those who are being filmed and those who are doing the filming (Stoller, 1992, p. 100).

(Loizos, 1993, p. 58). Tati's films document the transformation of France to modern life—using a fiction film to tell us something about how we live. Rouch's documentary films address aspects of life, the blood missing from the bloodless, things not wholly rational but that are still parts of our "real" and messy lives. Rouch's work also tells us something about how we live.

The opening sequence of *Chronicle of a summer* shows an iconic Paris metro staircase with people emerging from the underground station to the street level to begin their day's work (*see figure 3.6*). This film reveals something of what it is like to live in Paris. There are many exterior shots, the metro and the streets of the city, that people around the world recognise specifically as Paris. However, we are not shown the tourist's Paris, or the affluent glamorous Paris; instead the film mostly examines the lives of workers and students. The majority of the people featured in the film, in socioeconomic terms, are somewhere between the desperate poverty of those seen in *Rien que les heures* and the affluent bourgeoisie in *Play Time*.

Figure 3.6: Chronique d' un ete Paris metro stair 1960
Image source: Still from Chronique d' un ete (Chronicle of a Summer) ARGOS FILMS

The film begins by asking "Are you happy?" through short on the spot interviews in the streets of Paris. This question is developed by asking "How do you live?" in longer conversations, with people near their places of work and in their homes. There are five or six

characters that keep reappearing throughout the film, including a worker from the Renault factory in Billancourt. Billancourt is a small suburb just on the border of Paris, which could be read as a centre of modernity. In the first half of the 20th century it contained car factories, film studios, and modern houses designed by architects such as Le Corbusier and his contemporaries; this will be explored in the following chapter.

Chronicle of a summer had a huge influence on documentary filmmaking (Loizos, 1993, p. 56).[51] Near the start of the film Rouch and Morin are in conversation with Marceline, one of the people who appear throughout the film. Rouch asks them both "…I don't know if we can succeed in recording a natural conversation as we would without a camera. The presence of the camera might make the conversation unnatural, not real" (script taken from *Chronicle of a summer*'s subtitles). This is an ethnographic film about Parisians living in Paris made by Parisians; this approach was something new to anthropology. Before this, people of European descent made ethnographic films about non-European people.

The filmmakers Rouch and Morin appear in the film and involve the participants in the film making process. We see this in the film in the discussion between Rouch, Morin and Marceline, above; she at times is an interviewer and alternatively she is interviewed in the film. The viewer can see something of the director's role in the creation of the film, which draws attention to this film as a film. This approach is opposed to some other documentaries where the hand of the filmmaker and the mechanisms of filmmaking remain hidden from the audience (Loizos, 1993, p. 59). Similarly, in Hollywood film, the filmmaking process is generally hidden from the film viewer and is possibly a part of their charm. In Tati's film work he often draws our attention to the fact that we are watching a film, as discussed above.

[51] Peter Loizos states that this film was "genuinely innovative" but there were three innovations in particular that influenced documentary filmmaking (1993, p. 59). One, the use of the lightweight synchronous sound cameras, meant that people could be interviewed in their own parts of the city, which meant that "… ordinary locales—streets and corridors—could become part of normally filmed life" (Loizos, 1993, p. 59). The sounds, streets and locations could also be captured. Two, the use of jump-cuts (Loizos, 1993, p. 59-60). Three, accepting the "... filmmakers [Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin] as agents, as producers of the reality being filmed (Barnouw 1983, pp. 253-5; Eaton 1979)" (Loizos, 1993, p. 60).

In 1965 Jean Rouch made a short fiction film called *Gare du Nord* (*North Station*). It was part of a film called *Paris vu pas* (*Paris not seen*)[52] This is a film that consists of six separate stories; each story is made by a different director, including leaders of the French New Wave such as Jean-Luc Godard, Éric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol.[53] Each film deals with experiences of modern life, made in different locations or "quartiers" (local neighbourhoods within the arrondissements) within Paris. Rouch's film starts with a pan across the city from above, past a large crane and into the kitchen of a young married couple eating breakfast before getting ready for work. The wife complains about the construction noise and the new 12 storey building, which will soon block the view from their newly purchased apartment. The central theme of *Play Time* is the destruction of the city as the residents know it.[54]

Rien que les heures, *Chronicle of a summer* and *Play Time* address the topics of life in the modern city. To differing degrees they use elements of document and fiction to tell their stories. In all three films street scenes of Paris are depicted, we see the shape and form of the city and how people move around within and about it. *Rien que les heures* shows a Paris of poverty, that is filthy. This is the city that modern architects such as Le Corbusier sought to get air, sun, and light into so as to improve the urban environment and its housing, which was contributing to illness and fatality. Alberto Cavalcanti's awareness and knowledge of the modern architecture movement in the 1920s informs the making of his film. The moving images shown in this film tell us something of Tati's experience of Paris in his youth.[55]

The Paris seen in *Chronicle of a summer* is not that of the impoverished, but neither is it that of the affluent; the homes are the traditional housing of Paris, we do not see the

[52] The tile for the English release is *Six in Paris.*

[53] The camera person Raoul Coutard worked on *Chronicle of a summer* with Jean Rouch. Coutard also did a lot of camera work on the films of Jean-Luc Godard. Many of the French New Wave films were made on the streets of Paris. Cinema studies scholar Adam Bingham states that both the city symphony and the New Wave films depict the life in in the modern city but whereas many city symphonies, such as those of Ruttman and Vertov, show the city at a broader scale often from above, what the New Wave Films, especially Coutard's camera, shows is the city at a human scale, these films show faces of the people on the street who the professional actors appear in amongst (Bingham, date, p. 16).

[54] The actress Nadine Ballot, who plays the wife in *Gare du Nord*, is also one of the students who appears in *Chronicle of a Summer*.

[55] Tati came from a family that was not wealthy, but neither was it poor.

modern housing type seen in *Play Time*. *Chronicle of a summer* does not express concerns for the rapidly changing physical fabric of Paris, instead the film is concerned with topics such as the drudgery of the working classes and living with the feeling of being isolated in the modern city. However, its director in his film *Gard du Nord* does share Tati's concern regarding the modernisation of Paris, the demolition of the existing urban fabric of the city—which is interwoven within each individual city dweller—and it being replaced with something that is unfamiliar. The film viewer sees the Paris that Tati walked through when he was making *Play Time* from 1964 to 1967, the rapidly changing Paris his film is critiquing.

All three films contribute to our understanding of the city. Additionally, *Rien que les heures* and *Chronicle of a summer* contribute further to our understanding of *Play Time*. The films use the real and the fictive to convey their meaning, and combine the emotional connection to the city, physical experience and intellectual thoughts about the city. All express the "blood words" missing from scientific texts, providing a more complex understanding of the city, an understanding which interweaves human complexity within it.

Conclusion

In Tati's films there is a strong inter-connection between the fictive film world and the "real" world outside the film. There is a constant feed between what happens in the "real" city and the movies. When we engage with the cinema it can tell us something about our cities, our world and how we live. The Hollywood cinema introduced a new type of architecture to many people, presenting new ideas about architecture and a new way of living—the work of modern architects in the 1920s and 1930s was investigated and analysed by filmmakers, and given a story, which in turn the film audience watches and engages with, and interprets. Film can also tell us something about films themselves and their directors. *Rien que les heures* and *Chronicle of a summer* show us something of the Paris that Tati experienced, informing our understanding of *Play Time*, while at the same time building on our understanding of Paris itself.

This chapter has argued that the modern Paris in *Play Time* is an example of a city that was designed without addressing the human complexity; it has also argued that film facilitates an understanding of the complexity of the human experience which is able to

inform our understanding of the city—we need to integrate the rational with other elements of the human experience such as the emotional, the imaginary, dreams, memories, and the somatic into our designs. In taking this complexity into account we can create cities that work for the people who live in them, rather than against them. The following chapter explores Tati's connections with Paris, and his intellectual thoughts about the city; these contribute to Tati's creation of *Play Time*. His experience of Paris and his knowledge of modern architecture makes *Play Time* a filmic document that can be used to understand the city.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARIS CONNECTIONS: THE FOOTSTEPS OF JACQUES TATI AND LE CORBUSIER

> What bothers me most today is that Paris itself is being destroyed
> [Jacques Tati 1958] (Bazin and Truffaut, 2002, p. 296).

> …Le Corbusier succeeded in permeating the collective subconscious of the design profession with a set of urban prototypes forming a basis for much post-war building (Evenson, 1969, p. 107).

Introduction

This chapter explores Tati's physical connections to Paris, which are intertwined with his emotional connections to the city. This chapter argues that Tati's artistic motivation for *Play Time* comes from his connections to the city and his knowledge of modern architecture in Paris. It also argues that these connections—both emotional and physical—with Paris, and his knowledge of Paris, make *Play Time* a filmic document that can be used to understand the city. Chapter Four explores the ideas that influenced the redevelopment of post-WWII Paris; it is these ideas and their effects on the lives of the people that *Play Time* critiques, while Chapter Two illustrated Haussmann's Paris that Tati knew for the first half of his life, the Paris he laments losing in *Play Time*. Firstly, this chapter will explore Tati's connections to Paris and knowledge of Le Corbusier and the work of other modern architects. The second section will consider the relationships between Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan* (1925) for Paris and the Paris depicted in Tati's *Play Time* (1967). The third section will also examine Tati's personal and professional connections with Le Corbusier. The fourth section will explore Le Corbusier's influence on the rapid modernisation of Paris in the post-war period and the development of the suburbs. The final section will explore contemporary opinions of French intellectuals and artists regarding the rapid urbanisation of Paris during the period *Play Time* was made.

Tati & Paris: The Tati family picture framing gallery & Le Corbusier's *Pavilion of the new spirit*

Tati's knowledge and lived experience of modern architecture and urbanism provides much of the artistic motivation for how Paris is represented in *Play Time*. Tati was familiar

with modern architecture in Paris and with key modern architects as explained below. This knowledge and Tati's experience of Paris is reflected in *Play Time* and is not only apparent in the form that the architecture and the city take in the film, but also in the social and psychological aspects of the film and the way the physical experience of the body is depicted—what the modern city means for how people live and experience modern life. This depiction is a reflection of what was happening in Paris when the film was made. The architectural and urban design depicted in *Play Time* has its roots in the pioneering modern architecture developed by architects such as Le Corbusier.

In 1925 Le Corbusier installed his Pavilion of the New Spirit at the '*Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes'* (International exhibition of modern decorative and industrial arts). The picture framing gallery of Tati's family was located in walking distance from the exhibition, which occupied a large area between Les Invalides on the left bank and the Grand Palais on the Right Bank.[56] The picture framing gallery was located, until 1929, in the Rue Caumartin in the 9th arrondissement and then relocated only a few streets away to the Rue Castellane in the 8th arrondissement. The gallery was originally owned by Tati's maternal grandfather, but by the 1920s, it was run by his father, and it was here that Tati began an apprenticeship. Later Tati would live in this same area, in the 8th arrondissement, as a successful film director. He and Jacques Lagrange, a creative collaborator on four of Tati's films, lived in apartments that shared the same courtyard, for approximately twenty years, not far from the gallery, at 30 rue du Penthievre (Bellos, 1999, p. 158) (*see figure 4.1*).

This area on the Right Bank of Paris, where the Tati family gallery was located, and Tati lived, was programmed for demolition in Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan.* A map of the *Voisin Plan* hung on the garage wall of the *Pavilion of the New Spirit.* Forming part of the pavilion and attached to the garage/exhibition space was a one to one scale model of a cube-like residential unit, which was proposed to form the large accommodation towers suggested in

[56] The exposition also occupied adjoining sites along the river.

the *Voisin Plan.* This plan is one of many urban designs Le Corbusier created. The historian Timothy Benton writes that,

> Le Corbusier's intentionally provocative ideas for 'a city of three million people,' originally embodied in the diorama at the 1922 Salon d' Automne, had been further developed in a lecture in Strasburg six months later. There he announced the only way to save Paris was to destroy the Right Bank and replace it with a city of towers. Le Corbusier would deploy variations of this plan for the rest of his life, and they were guaranteed to provoke fury and adulation in equal measure (Benton, 2014, p. 223).

That Tati was aware of the *Voisin Plan* is more than likely. This plan caused a great stir in Paris at the time; it also brought a lot of attention to the architect, who was a master of self-promotion. The 1925 Exhibition in Paris was a huge event that lasted for months, from April till October—it would have been difficult, in Paris at the time, not to know about the 1925 Paris Exhibition and the activities surrounding it. The conversation in and around the Tati family picture framing gallery would be talk of artistic matters and events in Paris. Taking the above elements and the picture framing gallery's proximity to the exposition into account it seems likely that Tati knew of the *Pavilion of the New Spirit,* the *Voisin Plan,* and its proposed demolition for a large section of Paris, where Tati had many connections (*see figure 4.2*).

Figure 4.1: Tati's apartment 30 rue du Penthievre in the 8th arrondissement.
The apartment building is only a short walk to the locations of the picture framing galleries and the location of the 1925 Paris Exhibition, where the Voisin Plan was exhibited in the Pavilion of the New Spirit.
Tati wrote and directed three of his films while living here, Jour de Fete, Mr Hulot's Holiday and Mon Oncle. His creative collaborator, Jacques Lagrange, also had an apartment in this building.
Image source: Photograph taken by the author July 2019

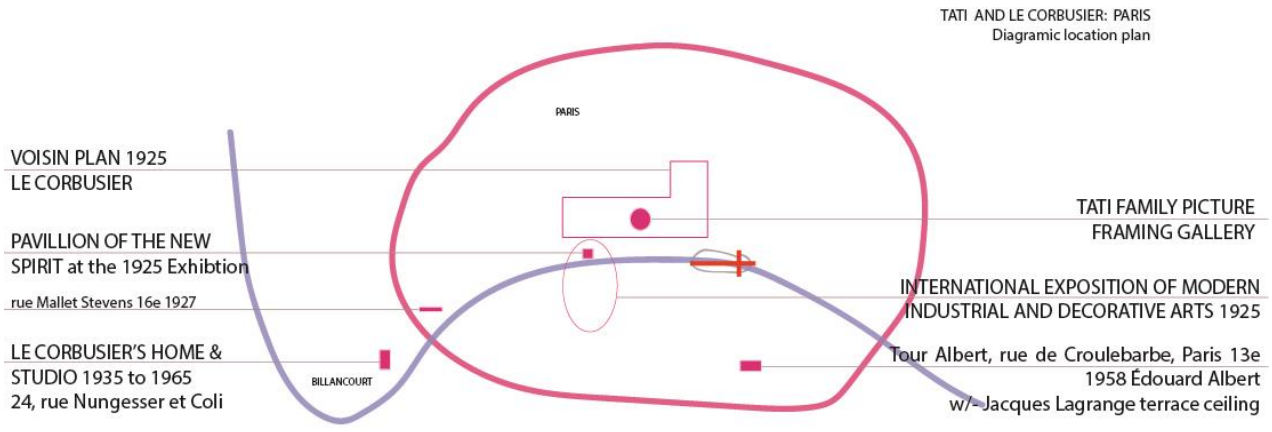

Figure 4.2: Location of the Voisin Plan and the Tati family picture framing gallery
Image source: Diagram by the author

From Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan* (1925) to Tati's *Play Time* (1967)

What is notable and important for Tati's representation of the city in *Play Time* is that which he does not show us. It is no small matter that in *Play Time* almost everything that is usually used to represent Paris is not visible. The traditional landmarks of the city are only caught fleetingly in reflections off the modern glass architecture. In an interview in 1958 Tati said, "What bothers me most today is that Paris is being destroyed" (Bazin and Truffaut, 2002, p. 298). In discussing the *Voisin Plan* Le Corbusier asks us to,

> …imagine all this junk [the existing urban fabric of Paris], which till now has lain spread out over the soil like a dry crust, cleaned off and carted away and replaced by immense clear crystals of glass, rising to a height of over 600 feet[57]… (Le Corbusier, 1998, p. 281).

Thus, in *Play Time* Paris is a city whose architecture consists of identical rectilinear modern glass and steel buildings. I argue that the audience sees Le Corbusier's vision realised in *Play Time*, the filthy old city has been "cleaned" away, totally removed, and replaced by modern glass towers, creating modern Paris. The glass towers—dreamt of by modernist architects of the 1920s and 1930s, and only materialising in the 1950s—have replaced historic Paris.

The overarching approaches to the urban planning of Paris in both Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan* and Tati's film *Play Time* are very similar—the complete demolition of the old and the reconstruction of Paris as a modern city filled with modern glass towers. In Paris during the post-war period large sections of the city were demolished and rebuilt (*see figure 4.3*). The architectural historian Norma Evenson states,

> Between 1954 and 1974, 24 percent of the buildable surface of the city was subjected to demolition and redevelopment, and entire districts were razed and reconfigured in the name of urban renewal (Evenson, 1979, p. 309-310).

[57] 600 feet converts to 182.8 metres.

It is apparent that *Play Time* reflects Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan*.[58] Joan Ockman notes "The face of Paris, 'capital of the nineteenth century,' was permanently reshaped during these years by a sweeping new wave of Haussmannization" (Ockman, 2000, p. 182). Perhaps Tati did not really fear that the *Voisin Plan* would be implemented, in total, across all Paris, but when *Play Time* was made some of Le Corbusier's ideas for Paris had, in part, been realised. In the mid-1960s, during the time the film was made, it would have been difficult to gauge how much of the traditional city would be lost to urban modernisation. However, the demolition of Paris did begin to slow during the 1970s. The architectural historian Philippe Simon writes that the destruction of Les Halles in 1971 (a large produce market in the centre of the city) "proved traumatic" for the people of Paris (2007, p. 137); during the 1970s Paris officials began to turn their minds to saving the older architecture of Paris (Simon, 2007, p. 137).

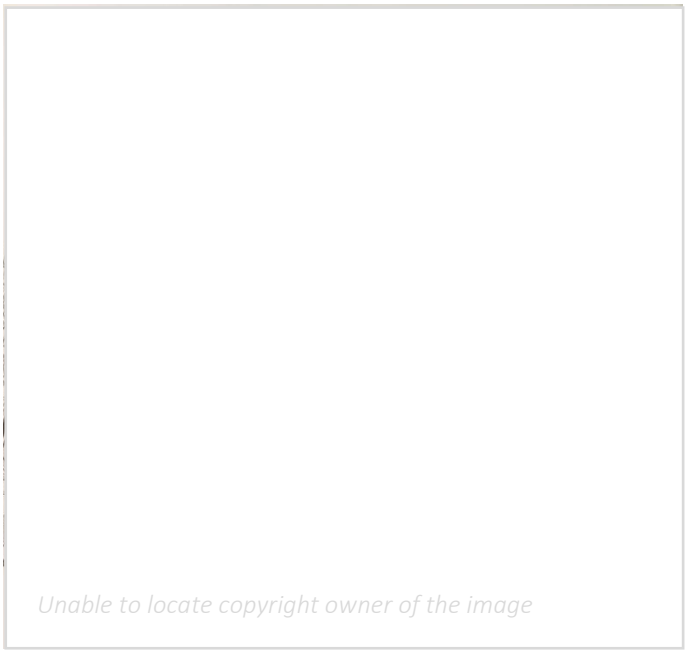

Figure 4.3: The map of Paris shows large areas of the city demolished and rebuilt in the post-war period. Image source: Paris: a century of change, 1878-1978 (Evenson, 1979, p. 289)

In proposing the demolition of much of the Right Bank Le Corbusier did nevertheless want to retain some of the old monuments, as "works of art", he writes, "[s]imilarly the "Voisin" plan shows…certain historical monuments, arcades, doorways, carefully preserved

[58] The buildings in the *Voisin Plan* and *Play Time* do take different forms. In the *Voisin Plan* the towers are cruciform, in the film the towers are rectilinear; however, and importantly, in both the towers are of modern glass.

because they are pages out of history or works of art" (Le Corbusier, 1998, p. 287). The isolated monuments in the *Voisin Plan* are similar to the historic monuments in *Play Time* that are reflected off the surfaces of the modern glass architecture.[59] The Paris of Tati's childhood is no longer part of a living city but something parcelled up as museum pieces and then only existing fleetingly in reflection.

The historic tourist sights of Paris are only visible in reflection, reflections that appear like ghosts of the past, asking the audience to contemplate its present and future urban environments. The traditional tourist sights are no longer tangible, they are only accessible through the image. In *Play Time* Haussmann's version of Paris, the setting of Jacques Tati's early life, has vanished.

All of Jacques Tati's films are concerned, in some way, with a sense of "home" and having a way of life disrupted by modernity and modernisation; even the film *Traffic*, which is largely set on a highway, depicts domestic scenes and private activities, such as sleeping. These scenes are mostly depicted as enjoyable, while the experience on the highway is unpleasant. This home is not just the house, but it is also the neighbourhood in which the house is located. For example, the village square in *Jour de Fete* (1949) and the old square in *Mon Oncle* (1958) are a part of home for Tati. In these cases, it can be seen that life was not only lived behind doors but on the street. In *Play Time* the absence of Tati's childhood Paris can be read as his devastation for what has been lost—the loss of the physical fabric of Paris and the way of life it allowed for. The modern citizens in *Play Time* have lost the way they once lived.

The destruction and rebuilding of the new city in *Play Time* has brought changes in the ways people live and use the space. These changes include: the un-openable apartment windows that create barriers—people can no longer connect with their neighbours via their

[59] When Barbara and the other tourists get off a bus, they walk through a travel agency—Barbara notices a travel poster for London. One of her fellow tourists beckons Barbara outside, "Barbara come here. Let's see the sights". Outside Barbara sees a similar building as shown in the travel poster, she steps back inside to check, and comes back out again. Barbara then takes a photograph of the modern building she sees before her. The old column monument goes unnoticed in the distance.

apartment windows as they did in the old square of *Mon Oncle*, for example; the separation of the city into functions removes the opportunity for accidental connections between people, when moving on foot between their home and place of employ, for example; and the removal of all the cafes from the streets in modern Paris greatly diminishes engagement with the city. The people in the modern city cannot move or use space in a way they once did because the architecture of modern Paris does not allow it. For example, in the residential district in *Play Time*, the apartment windows cannot be opened—unlike the square in *Mon Oncle*, which not only holds residences, but cafes and other businesses. The residents in modern Paris cannot lean out their apartment windows and chat with one another, the large glass apartment windows create a barrier between neighbours. At one point in *Mon Oncle*, in the old square, the concierge comes out onto the footpath with a pressed shirt and calls up to M. Hulot on the top floor; the neighbour beneath leans out of the window to see what the concierge wants, she then bangs a broom handle on the ceiling to gain his attention. M. Hulot comes out of his flat, acknowledges the concierge and comes down to pick up his shirt. At another point a man comes outside to the footpath, in his pyjamas, to water the plants; he notices some friends at the cafe Chez Margot and wanders over to join them. This incidental activity of meeting someone at the local cafe is impossible in *Play Time* because of the design of the city—the separation of the residential district from the others means the café, and other destinations such as the market, are no longer in the residents' neighbourhood, the opportunity for accidental meetings has been greatly diminished in the modern neighbourhood.

The possibility of meeting in a cafe has been removed entirely from the city, the whole of modern Paris is without the cafés that have long populated the traditional city's footpaths. In *Play Time* the pavements are dedicated to foot traffic. In the new city the footpaths are about movement, not sitting and engaging with people, or the city for that matter. Life is lived within the artificial interior of the modern buildings, the streets are predominantly used for movement between buildings. Almost all nature—and certainly all the trees—are absent from the modern Paris street, whereas trees appear in abundance in the streets of the actual city of Paris. The outdoor life of the Napoleon-Haussmann boulevards, with their abundant trees, is non-existent in the modern city.

Tati and Le Corbusier's personal and professional connections

Tati may not have read the work of Le Corbusier, argues Lee Hilliker, scholar of French studies, nevertheless he was interested in the modern urban experience (2002, p. 318). This interest is clearly depicted in his films. Tati had a familiarity with some of the leading modern architects and their work; he knew some of them personally. Even without these connections Le Corbusier, as one of modern architecture's leaders and self-appointed advocates, would have been known to Tati. Le Corbusier's influence and reputation began in the early part of the 20th century and continued into the post-war period when *Play Time* was made, and beyond. Conversely, Le Corbusier would have been aware of Tati. *Jour de Fete*, made in 1949, had already brought Tati fame within France, and he received an Academy Award for *Mon Oncle* in 1958. Given that *Mon Oncle* ridiculed modern architecture, Le Corbusier must have at least known of Tati's work, even if he was not personally acquainted with him. The radical proposals and uncompromising modernism of Le Corbusier contribute to Tati's creation of the set in *Play Time*; the film's set design is used to critique these proposals.

Lee Hilliker compares the representation of Paris in *Play Time* and ideas found in *The Athens Charter* (Hilliker, 2002, p. 318). The *Charter* suggests that the functions of leisure, work, and home should be located in separate parts of the city, connected by various means of transport; this planning is depicted in *Play Time*. Le Corbusier edited the proceedings of the 1933 Athens Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), and published them under the title of "*La Charte d' Athens*" (The Athens Charter) in 1943 (Cohen, 2014, p. 10). CIAM was an organisation formed by a group of modern architects who met between 1928 and 1959 in various locations throughout Europe. Le Corbusier was a dominant member of this group. Although not the first to suggest the division of the city in such a way (Cohen, 2014, p. 10) the ideas in *The Athens Charter,* and Le Corbusier's ideas on urbanism, influenced European planners (Phaidon Editors, 2014, p. 385), and the post-World War II urban redevelopment of Paris (IFHP-CRU, 1968). The division of the city into functions is seen in *Play Time,* the city in the film is separated into the business district, the residential and the leisure district.

Other influences of Le Corbusier and other modern architects that appear in Tati's work can be seen in the resemblance between the cubic *Pavilion of the New Spirit* and the Arpels' cubic modern house in Tati's 1958 film *Mon Oncle*. This house is a film set built in a studio in Nice, which was designed by Jacques Lagrange (Penz, 1997, p. 64), an artist and Tati's creative collaborator on four of his films. The modern garden in *Mon Oncle* took its inspiration from the garden at the Villa Noailles (1923-27), the garden was designed by Gabriel Guevrekian.[60] The house itself was designed by the modern architect, and contemporary of Le Corbusier's, Robert Mallet-Stevens. The Villa Noailles was the location for Man Ray's film *Les Mystères du Château de Dé* (1929), a film that Tati, who moved in artistic circles, may have seen. Mallet-Stevens also designed the exterior sets for the cubic modern house in Marcel L'Herbier's film *L'Inhumaine* (1924), of which the modern house in *Mon Oncle* is also reminiscent.

On a personal level, connections between Tati and Le Corbusier existed. In 1944 Tati married Micheline Winter, the daughter of Pierre Winter, an otolaryngologist (Guerand, 2007, p. 84). He contributed articles to Le Corbusier's and Amédée Ozenfant's "*L'Esprit Nouveau*" (New Spirit) magazine, on the topic of sport and health.[61] Another personal connection between Le Corbusier and Tati was Jacques Lagrange, Tati's creative collaborator noted above. He was a painter, and son-in-law of the architect Gustave Perret (Bellos, 1999, p. 150), brother of the architect Auguste Perret. The Perret brothers had employed Le Corbusier in the first decade of the 20th century (Frampton, 2001, p. 10). Lagrange was also the son of an architect, and his parent's friends included Le Corbusier and Robert Mallet Stevens; Tati leant a lot about modern architecture with Lagrange (Goudet, 2019, p. 23). Lagrange had further connections with modern architecture and Paris. Lagrange was commissioned to design the terrace ceiling at the Tour Albert (1958–1960), which at the time was the tallest apartment building in Paris, 23 storeys high. Located at 33 rue Croulebarbe in the 13th Arrondissement and designed by the architect Edouard Albert, it still

[60] This information was gained at the 2009 exhibition and shown in the catalogue (p. 105-109) at the Cinémathèque Française. The exhibition was called *Jacques Tati: Deux Temp, Trios Movements*.

[61] L'Esprit Nouveau was publish between 1920 and 1925 its articles address topics such as architecture, urbanism, literature, painting, music, science and sport.

stands today (*see figure 4.4*). It is a significant piece of modern architecture that has a place in the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, an architectural museum of Paris and France (*see figure 4.5*). Tour Albert played a role in the demolition of old Paris and its reconstruction with modern architecture which Tati so vividly criticises with his film work.

Figure 4.4: Tour Albert 33 rue Croulebarbe in the 13th Arrondissement
Image source: Photograph by the author July 2019.

Figure 4.5: A model Tour Albert in the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, showing the terrace ceiling by Jacques Lagrange.
Image source: Photograph by the author July 2019

There are further links between Tati and Le Corbusier. On the border of Paris to the southwest, enclosed by the curve of the River Seine, is an area called Boulogne-Billancourt. This area is one of the centres of modernity in Paris. Boulogne-Billancourt housed iconic activities of modernity, such as automobile manufacturing in the massive Renault Factory, and a movie studio where Tati made parts of his film of 1953 film *Mr Hulot's Holiday*. Le Corbusier's own modern home was built in Billancourt in 1935, where he lived and worked in his studio until his death in 1965 (*see figure 4.6*). Auguste Perret designed many modern houses in the 1920s and 1930s in the neighbourhood, along with Le Corbusier and Robert Mallet-Stevens (1886–1945). These modern houses of this period in this area are in such abundance that signs sit in the streets giving details of the architect and date. Nearby in the 16th arrondissement, within the borders of Paris, can be found a street called Rue Mallet-Stevens, containing several modern houses designed by Robert Mallet-Stevens in the

1920s.[62] This street runs off rue Docteur Blanche. Not far from rue Mallet-Stevens is a small street called Square du Docteur Blanche, which also runs off rue Docteur Blanche; it is here that Le Corbusier's 1923-25 Villa Roche is located. Also on rue Docteur Blanche is the 1950s apartment building by Jean Ginsberg (1905–1983), another influential architect in the post-World War II period. Billancourt was also where the Voisin factory—owned by the car and aircraft manufacturers who sponsored Le Corbusier's *Voisin Plan*—was located. In this small, active area of modernity, even if Tati and Le Corbusier did not meet directly in Billancourt, they likely crossed paths, and stepped in one another's footsteps (*see figure 4.7*).

Figure 4.6: Le Corbusier's home and Studio 24 rue Nungesser et Coli Billancourt
Le Corbusier lived here from 1935 until his death in 1965.
The apartment and studio now from a part of the Le Corbusier Foundation.
Image source: Photograph taken by the author July 2019

[62] There is even a museum, the "Musée des Années Trente" (Museum of the Thirties), which is dedicated to the experience of modernity, the modern industries and cultural activities that took place in Boulogne-Billancourt during the 1930s.

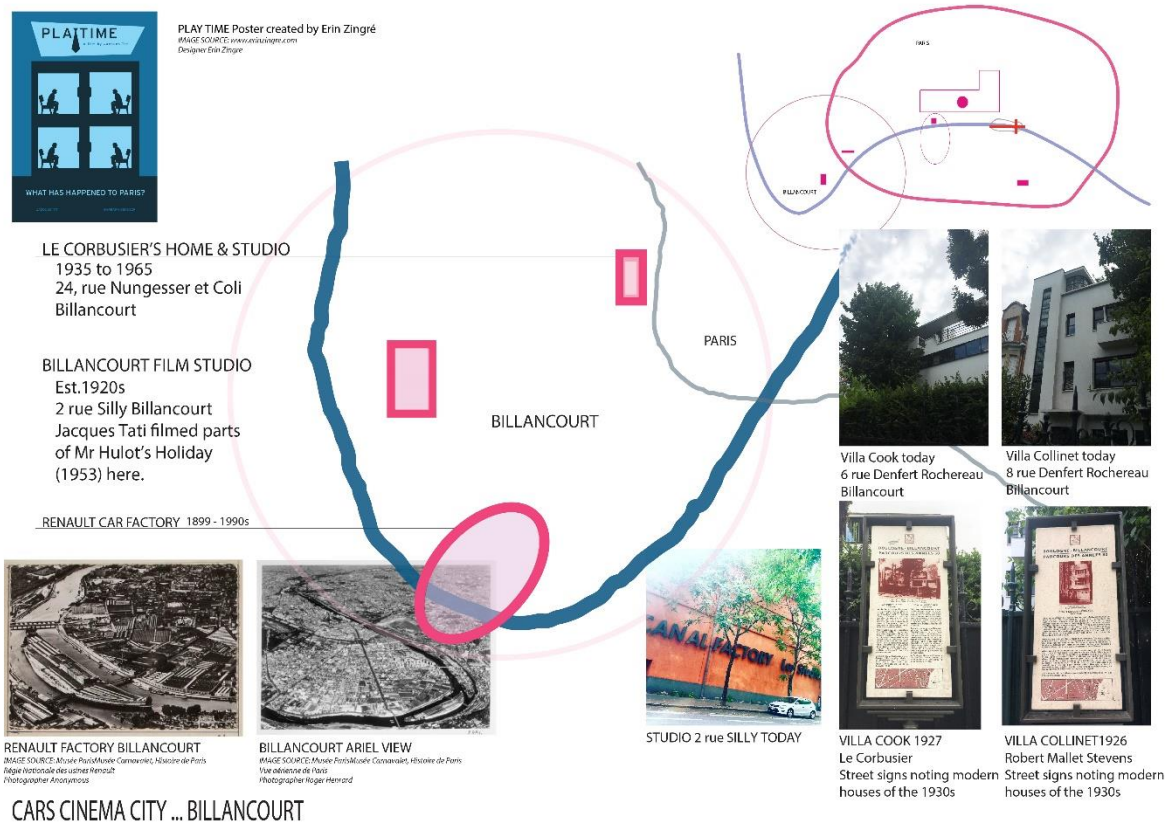

Figure 4.7: Billancourt and Paris
This diagram shows the relationship in Billancourt between major elements of modernity and modernization the cinema, modern architecture, and the automobile.
An enlargement of this diagram is in Appendix 3.
Image source: Diagram by the author, PLAY TIME Poster by Erin Zingré www.erinzingre.com, Renault Factory Billancourt Musée Paris Musée Carnavalet, Régie Nationale des usines Renault, Photographer Anonymous, Billancourt Ariel View Musée Paris Musée Carnavalet, Vue aérienne de Paris, Photographer Roger Henrard, https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr, other photographs by author

Play Time bankrupted Tati—proving his artistic and emotional commitment, he was determined to get the film made. *Play Time* was shot on a fully constructed set, where much of the expense for the film was incurred, unlike Tati's previous films that used location shots extensively, with some constructed sets.[63] Many of the buildings seen in *Play Time* are real, fully functioning buildings.[64] The real buildings are used in conjunction with two-dimensional set faces of buildings, that is, photographs of buildings put onto frames and then mounted on wheels. Some of the cars depicted in the film are also photographs on frames and

[63] The set in *Play Time* even gained a nickname, Tativille, because of its large size.

[64] Tati hoped the *Play Time* film set would become a film school, but it was decided to use the space as traffic infrastructure for Paris instead (Bellos, 1999, p. 242). Significantly, in terms of the clean well-ordered city that *Play Time* presents, it was the same Minister for Culture who declined Tati's request for a film school, Andre Malraux, who also instigated in the 1960s the scrubbing clean of all of Paris (Karmel, 1998, p. 25-27).

wheels, and significantly, some of the images of people seen during the film are two-dimensional, these are the cut-outs, used by Tati to show modern architecture's preferred aspect of humanity—in an image the people seen are bloodless. These human simulacra drained of their natural bodily aspects are discussed further in Chapter Five.

Le Corbusier's influence on post-war Paris, the suburbs of Paris—and the world

The blame for the grand ensembles, and their grim environment, is often placed, either fairly or unfairly, at the feet of Le Corbusier. The landscape designer and historian, Wade Graham, squarely places the "blame" for the tower buildings found in Paris, the suburbs of Paris and in other cities around the world, squarely at the feet of Le Corbusier, in his chapter "Slabs: Le Corbusier, Robert Moses, and the rational city". He writes that the "…spread [of the housing towers] is in good part traceable to the influence of a single man…" (Graham, 2017, p. 78), Graham indicates that this man is Le Corbusier. He refers to these housing towers as slabs and writes that they are,

> …rising up straight, grid covered boxes…standing alone or stretching for blocks, with an undeniable resemblance to gravestones: slabs. They are usually set back from the street, surrounded by parking lots, fenced-in lawns, and confused amalgams of sidewalks, planting and pavement, arrangements that might resemble parks but are clearly no such thing; or they sit on or hover above sprawling, hard, windswept plazas, whose intended purposes are unclear (Graham, 2017, p. 77-78).

In *Play Time* the suburbs are not shown, but all of modern Paris within the city boundary is now consumed by modern glass towers. The building type is repeated throughout the modern city in the film. Tati does not engage with the complexity of the history of modern architecture in the film *Play Time*. Tati's engagement with the works of modern architecture and the cities they create is more aligned with the opinions found in the popular mind, where the modern spaces are alienating and lifeless.

In *Play Time* Paris is a city which is entirely constructed by modern glass architecture. The glass towers, dreamt of by modernist architects of the 1920s, and materialising in the

1950s, have replaced historic Paris. In considering one of New York city's first glass skyscrapers, Lever House (1952), architectural historian Reyner Banham writes that,

> The public were less surprised by Lever House than was the architectural profession—and this was logical, for had not a massive body of opinion-making machinery been telling them, since the mid-1920s that modern architecture was just a lot of glass boxes? Architects, on the other hand, knew that between the glass legend and the concrete fact there was a great gulf fixed—a gulf forty years wide and deep as the building industry (Banham, 2002, p. 337).

I argue that Tati though was not interested in the complexity and nuances of the history of modern architecture, that is, he was not interested in the various influences on the elements and development of modern architecture. The history of modern architecture is complex. Not only were there many and varied opinions of what modern architecture *is,* held by architects, at the same time thinkers such as Siegfried Giedion and Henry Russell Hitchcock were writing about modern architecture, contributing further to its complexity and evolution. Furthermore, being modern these ideas were rapidly exchanged and so constantly feeding each other, creating yet another level of complexity. However, Tati was not interested in the history of modern architecture, what the evolution of the various ideas were, how they interrelated with each other, and the various shapes and forms these ideas created.

Even if the public were not concerned with the complexity of the history of modern architecture, and often placed the "blame" with Le Corbusier, he nevertheless did have a huge influence on his fellow architects, thus effecting the shape and form of the city in this period (Evenson, 1969, p. 107) and beyond. The "Centre de recherche d'urbanisme" (Centre for Urban Research) in one of their texts published in 1968 claimed that Le Corbusier was one of the greatest influences on urban planning in post-war Paris (IFHP-CRU, 1968). He also influenced policy makers, discussed further below. Hilliker explains that *Play Time* was made "… in an era when [the] official policy in Paris decreed conversion to modernism along the lines theorized by Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus architects in the twenties and thirties"

(2002, p. 319). The architectural historian Norma Evenson writes that Le Corbusier also had a global influence,

> Even though he [Le Corbusier] was denied planning commissions for most of his lifetime, he may be credited with establishing one of the most pervasive urban images of our time—a conception of an environment which, for better or worse, still underlies much contemporary design (Evenson, 1969, p. 7-8).

In the popular mind, Le Corbusier is often viewed as responsible for the "slab" architecture of the post-World War II period, while he may not be solely responsible and even if few of his urban plans were realised, the ideas contained within Le Corbusier's work had a great influence on building design and urbanism.

Le Corbusier was not only influential through his writing and built works, and his reputation and self-promotion, but he also had direct political influence in the post-World War II period. The French Government sent Le Corbusier to the United States in December 1945, with Eugène Claudius-Petit, the Minister for Reconstruction and Urbanism. The aim of their trip was to research American organisations and promote the culture of France. Le Corbusier had been appointed Head of the Mission for Urban Planning, Architecture and Cultural Relations (Mameli, 2015, p. 7). Eugene Claudius-Petit was the Minister for Reconstruction and Urbanism between September 1948 and December 1952. He was a political figure who affected the shape, form and experience of housing and urbanism in post-war France. Architectural historian Nicholas Bullock writes that Claudius-Petit,

> … spoke and wrote frequently in favour of Modern Architecture… Both the new architecture and the new urbanism were central to his vision of reconstruction … he was to offer unstinting support to progressive architects and designers such as Le Corbusier, Marcel Lods, Jean Prouvé, André Sive and Bernard Zehrfuss. [16] (Bullock, 2007, p. 7).

Le Corbusier not only had an influence on the popular mind, and with architects, urban planners and architectural historians, and scholars, but he also had direct political links with the French government's planning and building activities in post-war Paris.

The Paris city boundary and the suburbs

In *Play Time* the suburbs are absent. However, the city boundary is firmly established, but it remains unseen. The "*propre*" (clean and correct) inhabitants of modern Paris are the bourgeoisie, but the viewer does see people who live in the suburbs, the workers who come into the city during their working hours.

Le Corbusier and his contemporaries had a major influence on architecture and urbanism both within the Paris city boundary and in the suburbs of Paris in the period of urban modernisation, post-World War II. However, one element of modernisation that differed between Haussmann's mid-19th century project and the 20th century post-war project was the suburbs. From Haussmann's mid-19th century urban modernisation project onwards, the centre of Paris became increasingly middle class, as examined in Chapter Two. In the mid-20th century modernisation project, while much building work took place within the city boundary after World War II, many of the grand ensembles were built in the suburbs beyond the city boundary, and it is here the tower blocks of the *Voisin Plan*, and to an extent the Unité d'Habitation at Marseilles, appeared in great number.[65] The grand ensembles created a greater divide between Paris within the city boundary and the suburbs around the city centre.

The large-scale production of tower housing began in the early 1950s. By 1968 16.6% of the greater Paris population lived in grand ensembles (*see figure 4.8*) (Hensman, 2013, p. 436). Paul Delouvrier, the General Delegate to the District of the Paris Region from 1961 until 1969, was charged with the construction of housing in the suburbs during the 1960s. Anne Corbett states, "…Nineteenth-century Paris had Baron Haussmann. Twentieth-century Paris had Paul Delouvrier" (Corbett, 1995, p. T.015). The difference between the two periods of modernisation was that Haussmann was working predominantly inside the city boundary, and Delouvrier's work was predominantly outside the city boundary. Ravi Hensman writes,

[65] The tower blocks of the *Voisin Plan* repeat in size and number but they take a different form.

"The increasing separation between city and suburb culminated in Delouvrier's 1965 *Sche´ma Directeur* planning directive, in which the *banlieues* (the suburbs of Paris), were discussed as a menacing entity…" (Hensman, 2013, p. 443). The division between city and suburbs grew wider as the suburbs themselves grew in population and area.

Figure 4.8: Grands ensembles of Sarcelles in the suburbs of Paris
Le Corbusier suggested an expanse of green space between his towers in his urban planning. However, in the post-war redevelopment, in which Le Corbusier did have an influence, the tall housing towers constructed in Paris and its suburbs often left out the gardens between the towers, that he proposed.
Image source: http://www.villeetcinema.fr/category/conference-2/

The intellectual and artistic context of *Play Time*: commentary on the modern urbanisation of Paris

A similar criticism of life in the suburbs is seen in the documentary *L'Amour Existe (Love Exists)* by Maurice Pialat made in 1960. Pialat's documentary shows that many people in the suburbs had to travel long distances to their places of work in central Paris. The film shows the single-family home of the suburbs, the newly built housing towers and conversely the extreme poverty that some people were living in. In the 1960s some of the areas were still in slum conditions, shantytowns, as aforementioned; at this time there was a shortage of housing due to war damage, and immigration to Paris, from both rural areas of France and from outside the country.

The new towns in the suburbs separated the people from the urban environment which was home, from an environment that they were familiar with. Henri Lefebvre reflects upon the new towns in the Paris suburbs in his chapter called "Notes on the new town (April

1960)". He states that in the old town there were places in the street where you could sit and watch the activity and engage with your community, the streets were not only about getting from A to B. Here he expresses concern that the new town does not provide community, the opportunities for people to connect with each other. Lefebvre writes that "All those things which have made up the interwoven texture of the spontaneous places of social living since the neolithic village have been hurled one by one into time and space" (2011, p. 120). He makes an analogy between an old town and a seashell. The people living in a town slowly over time secrete the physical structure of their town (Lefebvre, 2011 p. 116). The old town grew incrementally and all the elements in the town worked in a close relationship, work, play and fun integrated with each other throughout the town. In the old town the buildings are like seashells—growing slowly, formed by the people who live in them. In a new town people are placed into shells, not of their own creation. Lefebvre writes that, "For them, to adapt means being forced into a pre-existing context which has been built without them in mind" (2011, p. 112).

This concern of the ability of the new housing, including the grand ensembles of which there were a great number, to create community between people is also expressed in Jean-Luc Godard's film *Two or three things I know about her* (1967). The class segregation marked by the city boundary can still be seen today and is depicted in such films as *La Haine* (Hate) (1995) set in the suburbs of Paris and portraying the violent and difficult lives led by its residents. The architecture and urbanism provide little to develop and sustain a community. Their difficult lives in the suburbs are juxtaposed with the abundance of plenty, to be had by some, in central Paris. However, not all reports of the new housing towers of the suburbs were negative. Some people that moved into the grand ensembles did like them and preferred them to the tumbling down damp accommodation they came from in central Paris, wrote the historian Norma Evenson in the late seventies (1979, p. 253). Yet, it seems that many did find the modern housing and urbanism of the grand ensembles to be disagreeable environments.

Another group who found the modern urbanisation of Paris in the post-war period problematic was the Letterists International, a group of intellectuals and artists who worked

in Paris during the 1950s, members of which became the Situationist International who worked through to the early 1970s. The members of the group critiqued much in modern life, such as capitalism and the urban modernisation of Paris in the post-war period. Letterists International were against the grand ensembles and felt Le Corbusier's ideas may not have been the architectural and urban solution Paris was looking for, Ravi Hensman writes that,

> In parallel with changes to French cinema came an evolution in how cities were viewed. The Letterist International (formed in 1952 in a meeting in the of Aubervilliers) was immediately critical of the grands ensembles, describing them as 'taudis types . . . C'est le style caserne' [Slum types…It is the style of barracks] (Conord 1954, 14). Letterists were also opposed to what they saw as a hagiography of Le Corbusier and called for a boycott of the 'Festival de l'art d'avant garde' held at his newly completed Cite Radieuse housing complex in Marseille (Kaufmann 2006, 131) (Hensman, 2013 p. 437).

Artists and intellectuals such as the Situationist International, Jean-Luc Godard, and Louis Chevalier had grave concerns for what they saw happening to their city.

One of the most telling reactions to the modernisation of Paris in the post-war period is the historian Louis Chevalier's book of 1977, *The Assassination of Paris*. In the foreword of the 1994 edition, the author John Merriman writes that with this book Chevalier "…proclaims the death of Paris" (Chevalier, 1994, p. ix). Merriman asks, "Who is to blame? In Chevalier's view, Paris has been violated by indifferent bureaucrats, arrogant technocrats and 'planners,' modern architects—the 'know-it-alls' of modern civilisation, who turned Paris over to greedy developers" (Chevalier, 1994, p. xiv). There appears to be a genuine anguish for the loss of Paris, as it was known to the authors, in works such as *The Assassination of Paris* and *Play Time*. The urban fabric was being radically altered. What was happening to the city in this period was not just the destruction of bricks and mortar, but also the destruction of a way of life. The existing fabric of the city provided a common point of connection—it gave everyone familiar with it a connecting point. The urban fabric holds

memories for its people. It gave orientation. It was a part of who they are, it was definitely a part of how they lived.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Tati's connections with Paris, his knowledge of modern architecture, and his connections with modern architects, were his artistic motivation for creating *Play Time* and explain why Paris appears as it does in the film. The bonds between Tati and the city of Paris, his experience of Paris through his lifetime, and what was happening at the time in the city this film was made, contribute significantly to the world of modern Paris depicted in *Play Time*. This chapter also argued that due to these connections *Play Time* is a filmic document that can be used in the understanding the city.

Le Corbusier had a huge influence on post-war Paris and this is evident throughout the film. While the film viewer does not see or hear a direct reference to Le Corbusier, his influence is felt. The physical fabric of Paris radically changed during the post-war period; much of the existing fabric of Paris was destroyed, creating new ways of living in the city, not all of which were agreeable to its the citizens. Many artists and intellectuals in Paris lament the loss of pre-war Paris in their various works, including Tati, showing the significance and large impact the rapid urban modernisation in the post-war period had on the lives of the people of Paris when *Play Time* was made. The following chapter explores the controlling aspects of the ultra-hygienic modern city depicted in *Play Time* and the automaton-like modern citizens in their compliance.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ABJECTIFICATION OF NATURE:

A CITY WITHOUT DIRT, WHERE THE IDEAL MODERN BODY IS AN IMAGE

> The surfaces of this machine aesthetic, in which little information could be gained haptically, figured as a sign of the new time (Wagner, 2008, p. 57).

Introduction

The smell is what we would be struck by most, if we of the 21st century suddenly found ourselves in early 20th century Paris, according to historian Steven Zdatny. Not only the abject smell of the city itself, emanating from its still inadequate system of removing human waste, but also the smell of unwashed people and their infrequently laundered clothes (Zdatny, 2012, p. 897). This is the city Tati was born into. Zdatny writes that the 21st-century visitor would be astounded by,

> …the smell—of crowded apartments without ventilation or water, of outhouses with no means of evacuation shared by dozens of families, of clothes never changed, feet rarely washed, and teeth that had never met a toothbrush (Zdatny, 2012, p. 897).

The housing, which determined personal hygiene by the addition or absence of flushing toilets, bathtubs and plumbing, only slowly improved in France over the 20th century. In 1951 only 6 percent of French housing had a bathroom (Zdatny, 2012, p. 914). What Zdatny calls the "hygiene revolution" (2012, p. 898) which began in the 1950s, he argues, took twenty years to take hold (2012, p. 916). This post-war "hygiene revolution" between the 1950s and 1970s is the period in which *Play Time* was made. It occurred, Zdatny argues, because of a desire to be modern. The revolution was, he writes,

> Nudged by the media, propelled by state action, inspired no doubt by the American brand, and supported by a surge in consumerism and a widespread desire to be younger, hipper, and cleaner—in a word, more modern—the French began to leave their tubless cold-water flats and collective pissotières behind them and to adopt

> more refined standards of personal hygiene. It was, by most accounts, a long road to travel (2012, p. 898).

Being hygienic came to represent modernity, people wanted to be modern. Their city, their clothes and the people increasingly became cleaner. In the modern city of Paris in *Play Time* everywhere looks like an ultra-hygienic hospital—the airport, the offices, the nightclub, the shops, even the homes.

Urban, personal and "social" hygiene are interrelated as established in Chapter Two. The urban hygiene project, which began in the mid-19th century, not only cleansed the city of traces and the smell of excrement, and other decaying natural substances, but it also involved a physical reconfiguration of the city into social divides, locating people of different classes in different areas of the city. There were richer and poorer areas in Paris before Haussmann's renovations, but much of the housing of Paris consisted of apartments, with the poorer classes occupying the attics, hot in summer, and basements cold and damp in winter, while the wealthier classes occupied the levels in between. *Play Time* expresses the end point of the urban and personal hygiene projects began in the mid-19th century, as argued in Chapter Two, and detailed here in Chapter Five. The modern city in *Play Time* belongs to the ultra-hygienic bourgeoisie. The working classes do not live in the modern city, but beyond the city boundary with nature.

Nature has come to be read as abject in the modern city and has been excluded—and this exclusion extends to any sign of the human body displaying any natural characteristics. In *Play Time* many of the people are represented as mindless and bloodless automatons. In the film people are represented as robotic, as mannequins, and as cut-outs, life-sized two-dimensional images of people glued to cardboard (*see figure 5.1*). The physicality of the human being is diminished in the modern city. The putrid old city has been reduced, in the final consequence, to images—the traditional tourist sights are only available to the viewer as reflections off the modern glass architecture—the people in the film are also reduced. This chapter argues that the body's natural functions and potentially unpredictable behaviour pose a threat to the modern city's cleanliness and order, therefore

the modern citizens are diminished to such a point that their antiseptic modern bodies no longer pose a threat to modern Paris. The citizens are barely human—the ideal modern body appears as an image, as illustrated with Barbara in the hotel room scene; even visitors to the city are subject to its endless aim to remove nature from the city and create order in its own likeness.

Figure 5.1: Play Time production still: three cut-outs with Tati (leaning against the bus) and an unidentified man.
Image source: The Definitive Jacques Tati (Castle, 2019, p. 159, Vol 3).

The first section of this chapter examines the sets and story line of *Play Time* and their role in Tati's critique of the ultra-hygienic post-war modern architecture and urbanism in Paris, which in the film effects the expulsion of nature from the modern city. The second part of the chapter addresses how nature is depicted in *Play Time*, or at least how it is absent: abject nature is banished from the modern city. The second section explores the modern glass as a hygienic material, the hygienic aspects air conditioning was thought to provide, and the influence of hospital design on the home. The third section of the chapter is

an analysis of the two domestic scenes. In the apartment scene, the modern bodies of the residents are represented as shop window mannequins. In the hotel scene Barbara, the American tourist, appears as a ghostly image—reflected off the clean modern glass. When the body exists in image the modern city is safe from the natural human bodily fluids and odours which threaten to disrupt it, thus the natural, now abject, aspects of the body no longer threaten the modern city. Following the analysis of the two domestic scenes, an exploration of the four reflected images of the tourist sites reveals the preference in the modern city for images of 19th century city monuments over them and their actual context, drawing a similarity to the city's preference for images of people over their actual and potentially disorderly and messy bodies.

Play Time: The set, the story and the characters

The architecture in modern Paris, as it is depicted in *Play Time*, is interchangeable. Each district appears almost identical, consisting of a grid of geometrical tower buildings of glass and steel. The city is divided into the business, residential, and leisure districts, which are all connected by transport, derived in part at least from *The Athens Charter*, in which Le Corbusier had a great influence, as examined in Chapter Four. In the first two sections of the film, set in the business and residential districts, there is one homogenous, neat, tidy and clean demographic—the bourgeoisie. Any untidiness, disorder, chaos, or individuals from other demographics, such as youthful members of the counter-culture, are not seen in the film until the third section, set in the leisure district, at the Royal Garden nightclub, and this only happens once the modern architecture has been destroyed.

The story of *Play Time* can be read simply as M. Hulot, played by Jacques Tati, trying to meet with a M. Giffard, whom he constantly misses, on a matter of business which is never disclosed. At the same time, a group of American women tourists have come to sightsee in Paris. However, the tourists only appear to see the famous historical sights/sites, such as the Eiffel Tower, in reflection off the modern glass architecture. M. Hulot and the women tourists are constantly seen missing each other until they finally meet at the Royal Garden nightclub.

During this scene, at the Royal Garden, the modern architecture is partly demolished and begins to be humanised. As the architecture breaks down, the people take part in what can be read as a Dionysian festival or, as Joan Ockman argues, a Rabelaisian banquet (2000, p. 191)—a celebration of the body and a breaking down of authoritarian order. In the destruction of the modern architecture, its control over the people is relinquished. The people start to regain their human qualities, they participate in carnivalesque eating, drinking and dancing, they become disordered, dishevelled, regaining and delighting in their sensuality. The city is transformed from one that is rigid, grey and controlling to another city which allows for a carnival of dancing, eating, and drinking. At the end of the film, a city roundabout becomes a merry-go-round, recalling Tati's first feature, *Jour de Fete* (1948), in which a small carnival involves the whole village. The small act of joyful anarchy, unintentionally initiated by M. Hulot at the Royal Garden, brings a freedom of being and doing to the people of modern Paris.

M. Hulot is a magical figure who comes to into the world and disappears again, argued the French film critic Andre Bazin (1983). He is writing about Tati's first film in which the M. Hulot character appears, *Mr Hulot's Holiday (1953)*. Bazin contends that M. Hulot appeared each summer at the beach and for the rest of the year did not exist. M. Hulot, perhaps, exists in a magical space beyond the human realm of being, but appears now and again in the human world to remind us of what is possible. In *Play Time,* he leaves behind a city changed, one which has greater freedom, a freedom of movement, at least, one that allows for full sensory engagement with the city, between its citizens and life.

Tati plays the lead character in all his feature films, first as Francois, the postman, in *Jour de Fete,* and then as the character of M. Hulot in the following four films. Some film scholars and historians, such as David Bellos, Brent Maddock and John K. Simon, have described the M. Hulot character variously as embodying embarrassment (Bellos, 1999, p. 189), fright (Maddock, 1997, p. 57) or timidity (Simon, 1959, p. 18). Conversely, I would argue he is none of those things as he is not concerned or perhaps even aware of other people's judgements—such as those of the bourgeois characters which appear throughout most of his films. Moreover, literature scholar Diarmuid Hester describes Tati as an anarchist

and argues that Tati's kind of anarchism, which we see embodied in M. Hulot is "… an instant demand for the liberation of the individual from artificially-imposed forms of authority" (Hester, 2011, p. 4).

As a disruptor M. Hulot shows us another way of being in the world, argues philosopher Pedro Blas Gonzalez (2005). He is beyond the constraints set by a "dominant ideology" (Wood, 1979). The modern architecture embeds and represents the dominant ideology, as do the bourgeoisie in their appearance and behaviour, who reflect and fall into line with the architecture of the modern city. The bourgeois feature in Tati's films as representative of the normative social order. The bourgeoisie constantly frown upon M. Hulot, alternatively Andre Bazin argues the M. Hulot character, "… is all grace;…and the disorder that he introduces is that of tenderness and freedom" (1983, p. 151). M. Hulot, while being a disruptor, an agitator, a joyful anarchist, also conversely plays the figure of the everyman, or every person, inviting us all to take on something of his role in our daily lives. *Play Time*'s critique suggests a richness of life is lost; a less sensual life is lived in the modern city. In this modern city, the people are as neat, clean, ordered and cut off from nature, as the modern city. It is as if the bodies in modern Paris have been drained of all their organic material and all else that makes them human.

In *Play Time* nature in modern Paris has been deemed to be unclean, impure, abject and thereby almost totally removed from the city. The natural includes that related to natural bodily functions, bodily fluids and odours. The modern architecture of Paris, as it is depicted in *Play Time,* has been distilled into a "purity". In the film, the division between nature and the city is created by that which is deemed to be clean and that which is deemed to be unclean. The city is clean as are the people, both remain so perpetually. In *Play Time,* keeping the body clean and well ordered, to suit the clean and well-ordered city, is a key element in the creation of the "good citizen", thereby controlling the population. The cleanliness keeps the citizen's behaviour well ordered. The abjection of nature is what unpins the power of the controlling environment. This controlling environment works because of the threat that the abject entails, that of being expelled from the city. Being unclean disrupts the order of the city, and so the disorderly unclean citizen is cast out by the

unseen and pervasive force of the modern architecture along with all the abject, yet natural, elements.

In modern Paris, as depicted in the film, it is not only the domestic environment which has become as clean and hygienic as a hospital, but the entire city is now ultra-hygienic. As the film opens it cuts from an exterior shot of a modern glass and steel rectilinear tower to interior shots populated by nuns, patients, and nurses. All visual and audio indicators lead us to believe we are in a hospital—but when we see the tail of an aeroplane out of a window we begin to realise that the setting is actually an airport. As the airport resembles a hospital, we realise so too does all the other architecture in modern Paris, the offices, the nightclubs, the homes. The entire city, like the hospital, is a hygienic, antiseptic, sterile environment.

The Absence of Nature

While there is an abundance of plant and animal life in all of Tati's other feature films, in *Play Time* nature is absent, unless it is fully constrained. The animals play significant parts in telling the story or the making of a joke. Tati's 1953 film *Mr Hulot's Holiday,* for example, opens with holidaymakers in their various modes of transport—trains, buses, bicycles, fast cars, old slow cars—wending their way to a seaside town. M. Hulot, in driving towards his holiday destination, goes through a small village—in the middle of the street lies a large dog, and when M. Hulot honks the car horn, asking the dog to move, it remains lying there wagging its tail. Eventually, after more honking, the dog gets up and goes to M. Hulot for a pat, before the holidaymaker drives on his way. At another point in the film, M. Hulot is helping a group of people by the quayside with a small truck which has broken down. They tie a rope between this truck and the one in front of it. When the rope becomes taut M. Hulot, unwittingly standing on the rope, is sprung into the water—completely disappearing. It is only a little dog in the film and the film viewers who know where M. Hulot has gone, none of the other characters within the film know of M. Hulot's whereabouts. Here the dog is a key element in the working of this joke.

Mr Hulot's Holiday is located in the natural setting of an ocean beach adjacent to a small village. *Jour de Fete*, Tati's first feature film is set in a rural village at harvest time. This

film is abundant with plant and animal life, dogs, poultry, goats, horses. There is even a joke with a bee, indicating that Tati's engagement with nature carries to tiny insects. This is a significant gesture, as the bee is a part of the crop pollination process, which influences the livelihood of the village, and the lives of those who buy their crops. A big part of *Jour de Fete* concerns nature's cycle through the seasons of the year, centred around the growing and harvesting of crops, and how this shapes the villagers' lives. In Tati's fifth and last feature film *Traffic* (1971) the main joke is that the "Altra", a modern camping car—with all modern apparatus and conveniences—is being taken by truck to a car show in Holland. The "Altra" spends all the time on the truck while everyone camps around it. This modern camping vehicle, with all its modern gadgets, does not appear to facilitate a connection with nature, which is one of recreational camping's primary objectives.

In Tati's third feature film *Mon Oncle* (1958), the contrast between the natural and artificial is starkly presented. The film is set in two strikingly different parts of Paris, one a traditional section and the other a recently modernised section, featuring modern architecture and urban design. The old and new quarters of Paris are contrasted throughout the film. A group of dogs in the film are one of three key elements used to connect the two disparate parts of the city and demonstrate the contrasts, the other two connecting elements are the characters M. Hulot, the uncle, and Gerard Arpel, the nephew. M. Hulot, Gerard, Daky, the family dog and the other dogs are links between the old and new parts of the city; throughout the film they are seen moving back and forth between the two quarters. Tati uses this contrast between the two sections of Paris to demonstrate his view of the negative aspects of modern urbanism and the positive aspects of the older Parisian urbanism. The old quarter, where M. Hulot lives, is slightly dirty and well worn, compared to the quarter of Paris where Gerard lives with his mother and father and Daky—here everything is new and always clean.

The Arpels live in an ultra-hygienic geometric house. They have an automatic vacuum cleaner, which Gerard mistakes for his mother. Mme. Arpel is always dusting. Their garden is quite literally neatly parcelled up into geometric shapes, most of which are filled with coloured stone. The footpaths through the geometric shapes make an awkward route for

anyone who uses the garden. The geometric design means the people have to move through the garden in a highly specific and controlled manner. There is some grass, and at least one tree, but it has been severely espaliered against a wall, resembling the geometric architecture and garden in which it has been placed. Whereas in the old quarter the central square contains shady trees. The old square is a part of the outdoor space for the people who live in the neighbourhood. The outdoor space for the Arpels is the private geometric garden, and the roadways around their house. Daky at times takes himself off to play with the dogs in old Paris, sometimes they see him home but they cannot get past the front gate, we see them looking in through the gate. This is similar to the people who visit from the old quarter of Paris who only ever make it to the front gate—M. Hulot is allowed into the modern house under sufferance. The gates in part keep out the dirt, the nature found in the old quarter of the city—creating a boundary that is hygienic, physical, and social.

The urban form of the old square allows for accidental conviviality to occur. This square is primarily designed for pedestrian traffic, we only see one car awkwardly enter the square, which occurs at the end of the film, and this is to take M. Hulot away.[66] The apartment houses, shops, café, hairdresser, and other amenities surround and lead directly off the square. During the day a market sells fruit, vegetables and other foods. Local fairs are also held in the square. All the people around the square know each other to some extent. At one time a man, in his pyjamas standing on the street watering his window flower box, has his attention caught by a friend sitting at a table outside the cafe Chez Margot, he wanders over to join his friend. This contrasts with the modern part of Paris where the Arpels live. Here there is no public space where people could accidentally meet each other, building relationships. The gardens all have high walls, the footpaths are narrow, the public space in the ultra-clean modern quarter is designed for the car and not the pedestrian. The walls and cars form social boundaries.

[66] M. Arpel has found a job for M. Hulot which requires him to leave Paris. M. Arpel felt M. Hulot's influence on Gerard, the modern house, and their modern lives, was too disruptive—M. Hulot turns their modern world upside down in a carnivalesque fashion, to Gerard's delight and M. Arpel's dismay.

Above the old city square and to the side is a small hill. This is a patch of unused ground, with long green grass, and cast-off industrial debris. During this scene on the hill we see a man who sells, from his filthy stand dressed in his filthy apron, something that looks like fried dough, which has added to it an abundance of jam and sugar—Gerard and his friends from the old part of Paris buy these and relish in them. A contrast is made here between relishing in the senses in the old quarter and the anesthetisation of the senses in the modern quarter. When Gerard returns from the old part of town he is scrubbed clean by his mother; shortly after Gerard is seen sitting in the Arpels' clinic-like modern kitchen staring miserably at a boiled egg in a metallic eggcup. The abundance of plant and animal life in the old part of the city cannot be found in the new, and if it exists it is repressed and controlled. In many ways *Play Time* can be read as the full bloom of an architectural and urban infection, the seed of which is the modern neighbourhood in *Mon Oncle*.

The absence of plant and animal life in *Play Time* is significantly different to all of Tati's other films, where their presence is in abundance, and they are often used to show the richness of life. The joy to be found in nature, such as the annual cycle of the seasons marked by the harvest, in *Jour de Fete,* is absent from *Play Time*. The old rural harvest in *Jour de Fete* brings people together. The people of the village help each other out. Francois, the postman disheartened by his failed attempt to modernise the postal service after watching an American film on the subject, helps with the harvest, while a boy finishes his mail round. Both the pattern of the harvest and the mail round link us back to the sun; one pattern is daily, the other seasonal. The film *Mr Hulot's Holiday* marks the same annual cycle, that of the summer. The characters engaging further with nature via the beach, and the dogs and horses that appear throughout the film.

There is only one dog seen in *Play Time*, the pet of M. Giffard, who unlike Daky is always clean and is on a lead—its movement is restricted. In Tati's other films almost all the dogs are unleashed. It is while out walking the dog that M. Giffard and M. Hulot finally meet, highlighting the significance of the dog to the film story. It provides a narrative element. This dog not only brings M. Hulot and M. Giffard together, but the presence of the dog brings to our attention the limited number of animals in *Play Time,* highlighting the fact that nature is

controlled in modern Paris. The second instance of the presence of a dog in *Play Time* is hinted at in one of the opening sequences—we hear it but do not see it, a woman pats her bag, implying her dog is hidden inside. In the Paris of *Play Time,* the animals' messy and at times unpredictable behaviour has been banished.

Similarly, the plant life in modern Paris is only seen on rare occasions and when it does appear, it is neatly manicured or removed from the earth in which it grew. One of these occasions includes a flower stand in the business district tended to by an elderly woman. Her appearance is working class and her dress reminiscent of earlier times. Nowhere in modern Paris are we shown where the flowers might be grown; they are grown outside of the city where the flower seller and the other workers live. It appears that once the flowers are removed from the ground in which they grow, they are safe to bring into the modern city. The flower stall is predominantly for the benefit of the tourist, something to look at and take a photo of, during this scene there appear at least six tourists, from various countries. They include Barbara, who ironically exclaims "That's really Paris!" and then tries, to no avail, to take a photograph of the stall and flower seller without any of the other tourists in the background, she repeatedly asks people to move away. It seems unlikely that Barbara got her shot in the end. Tati is showing that nature, the flowers, and old Paris are alien, devalued, and out of place in the modern city. The old flower seller, like the traditional monuments in the reflected images, appears as a relic of former times, her temporary canvas tent flower stall is perched awkwardly on the modern concrete footpath, it is something of the past that remains, but is insubstantial.

Another instance of plant life is seen in front of the apartments, just below the huge glass windows—it is not clear if the plants are artificial or real. At the Royal Garden nightclub there is a flower bed seen on the balcony, however, it is rendered insignificant by the modern design, it is dimly lit, and sits off to the edge of where the action and activity is located. It is not a space that draws people to it. It is a left-over space, when a waiter has his uniform torn by the modern design he is sent out to the balcony, so that he remains out of sight. The balcony with the flower bed again shows the devaluation of nature in the modern city.

Why is the nightclub in *Play Time* called the Royal Garden? Royal and garden are both English words, not French. The "royal" may refer to the class system and the conservative stuffiness of the bourgeois characters. Calling the nightclub a garden is also significant. The word garden has a pointed use within the film, more generally because there is no garden in modern Paris, and more specifically because at the Royal Garden nightclub the garden goes mostly unnoticed. It is on an unlit balcony with the ill-fated waiter. The waiter, while on the balcony, becomes increasingly dishevelled and dirty through the night. His uniform has been torn by the modern architecture of the newly opened restaurant. As he stands with his torn uniform, other waiters come replace parts of their uniforms with parts of his that are still "good". His clean bowtie, for example, is exchanged for one that has fallen in the gravy. The waiter has been put outside on the balcony with the other unacceptable things—the plants and the earth in which they sit—the potentially disordered, untidy and definitely unclean, have been excluded.

There is, however, one moment in the film in which we are guaranteed that real flowers exist, but this involves outsiders. The joke involves the flowers on the hats of another group of American women tourists. As Barbara and her group leave their hotel to go out for the evening, another group are returning. As the two groups pass each other on the escalator, we hear in an American accent "I'm going straight to bed". The flowers on the second group's hats have all wilted, reflecting their wearers' exhaustion. It is only outsiders, working-class people and tourists, who are associated with nature, with the abject.

Play Time is among other films in its representation of nature as the antithesis of the modern city. In films that depict cities in the future, such as *Metropolis* (1927), *Things to come* (1936), *THX 1138* (1971), *Logan's run* (1976) and *Brave new world* (1980),[67] nature—plant and animal life—is almost entirely absent and if it does make an appearance, it is highly manicured, trained and or restrained. The cities in these films are often represented as existing under the protection of a dome, or within a human-made construction cut off from the outside. In these cities, nature is outside, and a highly

[67] *Brave new world* is, strictly speaking, a television show.

controlled modern architectural environment exists within. In *Logan's Run* the two main characters, when making their escape from the domed city to the wilderness outside, must pass underneath the city and in doing this come across a forgotten, disused, fish farm. The two are intrigued by the old technology and remind themselves of distant stories they heard as children about this fish farm providing food—but as the fuller memory of the story comes to them they are disgusted by the organic food stuff, and unmechanised procreation. This scene reflects the repulsion of the natural body's functions of eating and giving birth. Nature, including the nature of the human body, is depicted as unwelcome, at times disgusting, within these thoroughly controlled modern environments. *Play Time* is not a domed city but has much in common with films depicting cities of the future. Within the domed area there is a highly controlled environment, where people dress and behave alike. This aspect, along with the absence of nature, is similar to *Play Time* in its representation of the bourgeoisie—the citizens of modern Paris.

Tati suggests that while the citizens of modern Paris look like people, they are hollow simulacra. The dehumanised body, created by this modern city, is represented in *Play Time* in numerous scenes throughout the film. The modern citizens are depicted as bloodless entities, as mechanical creatures, as shop window mannequins, and as ghostly reflections. In the ultimate circumstance the human being is reduced to a cut-out—that is, photographs of people cut-out and glued to life-sized cardboard shapes of a person. The cut-outs stand in for actual human actors or extras in a number of scenes throughout the film. Moreover, Tati plays with them during the film, indicating that the cut-outs and modern citizens are interchangeable. Sometimes we are made to think we are looking at a cut-out only to discover it was a real person. The reverse is also true. In the opening sequence of the hospital/airport scene there appear to be cut-out representations of people in the distance. At first the people seem to be completely still, lifeless, but then they move slightly, before returning again to the mannequin-like position they held before.

A representation of the mechanical, machine-like human appears in the section of the film set in the business district. At the end of the working day, a group of men who are similarly dressed approach a row of identical cars. They proceed to move in unison in the act

of going from the footpath to getting into their cars. The businessmen move with jerky artificial movements, like animated dolls or robots. In the apartment scene, the family are made to appear as shop window mannequins, and in the hotel room scene Barbara, the American tourist, appears as a ghost. The apartment and hotel room scenes are discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter.

The ultra-hygienic body of the modern citizen is a further aspect of the dehumanisation, suggests Tati. Paris is now an ultra-modern city, thoroughly cleansed, creating an environment which is totally controlled and controlling. Both the city and its people are now clean. The cleanliness, mechanisation, and bloodlessness of the modern body have social implications with political aspects. The citizens, if they remain clean and machine-like, are allowed to stay in the modern city, but if they display any natural body characteristics they will be expelled from the city. This expulsion includes the working classes as they have a strong association with nature. At night the working classes return to the earthy place where the flowers grow. The modern city has vanquished nature and the filth it entails, the citizens have been dehumanised. The modern citizens have been rendered safe; they appear to be human but they behave like robots or appear as images. They no longer pose a threat to the order of the city. Their fleshy selves, containing blood, excreting sweat, urine and odours, which threaten to traverse from inside to outside of the body, creating disorder in the modern city, have been eliminated.

The two domestic scenes in *Play Time*

In *Play Time* there are only two scenes that can be read as domestic, where people might attend to their bodily functions in private. The first is the apartment scene, when M. Hulot reluctantly visits his old army friend, M. Schneller, and his family. The second is when Barbara, one of the American tourists and M. Hulot's "love interest", is in her hotel room getting ready to go out for the evening. An analysis of these two domestic scenes will show that in modern Paris, as seen in *Play Time,* the bathroom, the toilet, taps, pipes and the urban sewer system, which supports them, are apparently no longer necessary—because in the ultra-clean modern city, nature has been excluded, perhaps even that nature that is concerned with the natural human body. The ultra-clean modern city creates the ultra-clean modern body. The modern architectural design is well ordered, with straight lines and right

angles, the antithesis of the human form. Modern architecture is also hygienic. Glass, omnipresent in the modern city depicted in *Play Time*, was valued by modern architects for its hygienic properties.

Glass, it was believed at the turn of the last century, had hygienic benefits. A city built of glass would be clean. Greene writes that "Sunlight entering the buildings through walls of glass would kill microbes *and* supposedly cure tuberculosis. Non-porous surfaces and the careful choreography of the movement of individuals and objects through these spaces would ensure absolutely antiseptic conditions" (2012, p. 32). Greene argues,

> Public nursery schools (écoles maternelles) housed in ceramic-tiled buildings with rooftop sun terraces provided extensive facilities for the hygienic training and medical supervision of working-class children. Open-air schools (écoles de plein air) in glass-walled structures with removable walls fostered the unhindered access to the fresh air and sunlight that, it was hoped, would rehabilitate scores of sickly, 'pre-tubercular' children. Whether through a visual rhetoric of containment or total permeability, through strategies of technological or natural regulation, each modern structure represented the imagined ability of architecture to bolster children's health (2012, p. 8-9).

Furthermore, authors and architects such as Paul Scheerbart and Bruno Taut, working in Europe in the early 20th century, believed glass would bring about great social change. Kai Gutschow, architectural historian, writes that, "Borrowing from Taut's building and Scheerbart's writing, Behne [Adolf Behne, critic] transfigured glass from a transparent modern technical material to a crystalline expressive spiritual force that could transform culture" (2006, p. 68). Gutschow, in writing on Bruno Taut's glass pavilion for the Werkbund exhibition in Cologne (1914), argues that "… Taut intended his Glashaus not only to provoke radical change in art and architecture, but also to give inspiration for massive social, cultural, and political change promised by vision of a new light-filled world" (2006, p. 69).

Throughout his long career, Le Corbusier had a great interest in glass and light (Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 63). He too believed in the hygienic and thus health benefits of glass. Le Corbusier thought of the City of Refuge (1933), for the Salvation Army, as a "healing machine" (Ragot, 2015, p. 57). For this building, Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret proposed a huge glass façade which would seal the building off from the outside, from nature. Gutierrez notes that in the 1920s and 1930s Le Corbusier wrote theories and had experiments conducted regarding air conditioning, purifying air, separating the inside of buildings from the outside. Gutierrez quotes Le Corbusier, she writes that, "… buildings [of the future] will be altogether hermetically closed. Windows will no longer be needed on the façade; consequently neither dust nor flies nor mosquitoes will enter the houses…" (Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 63). An "artificial climate" would be provided via a double glass façade and act "…as a barrier to the exterior that protects the interior as a homogeneous hygienic environment" (Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 64). This double glass façade was referred to by Le Corbusier as *mur neutralisant*, a "neutralizing wall", which was part of the idea which he termed "exact air" (Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 63). According to Le Corbusier, Gutiérrez informs us, "exact air" is "…. air freed of dust, disinfected, humidified exactly and brought to a constant temperature of about 18°C" (Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 64). Between the two sheets of glass in the double façade cold air would be present in summer and warm air in winter, thus allowing for insulation from the exterior, while being able to see out at the same time (Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 64).

Modern science and technology allows for the modern city; without the artificial air and lighting and the technology for the glass curtain walls that emerged in the 1950s, the modern city of tall glass towers could not exist. Glass, which constitutes much of the modern city in *Play Time*, was favoured by modern architects as a hygienic material, it is an inert material that nothing sticks to permanently.

The impact of early 20th-century hospital design on modern homes of the 1920s and 1930s is clear for architect and scholar Beatrix Colomina. In her essay "X-ray Architecture the Tuberculosis Effect", Colomina starts with various descriptions of hospitals, designed in the most part for tuberculosis patients. These hospital designs employed sun, air and light as

cures[68]. She notes that two books that were published in this period about the modern house spend much of their space on hospital design and in doing so show how the modern house exhibits aspects of the modern hospital (Colomina, 2015, p. 82-83). These design ideas regarding hygiene and modern architecture in hospitals and dwellings were intended to create healthy bodies. Colomina draws our attention to the *Villa Noailles* (1923), designed by Robert Mallet-Stevens, and notes how this house itself has been read as a health resort—with abundant fresh air and sunshine, much like modern hospitals (Colomina, 2015, p. 83).

In *Play Time* the antiseptic design of the modern city is established in the opening sequence of the hospital/airport scene. This design is then repeated throughout modern Paris. The exterior of the apartments and the hotel are of the same architectural design as the rest of the city. As noted previously, the design of the apartment district is the same as the business district seen earlier in the film, and identical to the leisure district seen in the final section of the film. Not only is the exterior architectural design of the buildings repeated throughout the various districts, but so is the interior design and even some of the furniture. The rectilinear black foam chairs seen in the apartment and the hotel room are exactly the same as the ones seen in the business district earlier in the film. M. Schneller, M. Hulot's old army friend, even performs the same gesture as M. Hulot did while in the glass waiting room. That is, both characters push the back rest of the foam chair down to see and hear the peculiar way it pops up again. This act emphasises the fact that the same ultra-hygienic design is repeated throughout the city. The floor of the apartment is covered with a cold grey linoleum continuing and emphasising the antiseptic hospital theme of the opening sequence. Furthermore, the apartment scene continues with the same colour scheme, a palette of grey-blue that is used in the office district, a colour palette associated with institutions.

[68] As turns out, these were not cures for tuberculosis. "Robert Koch discovered the tubercle bacillus in 1882, a standard medical book named the cause of the disease: 'unfavourable climate, sedentary indoor life, defective ventilation and deficiency of light'. It took a long time for these notions to lose credibility…" (Colomina, 2015, p. 73).

The materials in the apartments and hotel room, such as glass and linoleum, create an ultra-modern presence and convey a meaning of cleanliness and hygiene—in the 1960s neither linoleum nor glass were new; they did, however, carry hygienic associations which were viewed as modern (Zdatny, 2012, p. 898). Even though the invention of linoleum occurred 100 years before *Play Time* was made, in the post-war period the solid grey linoleum held strong associations with modern hospital design and possibly still does for many today.

Throughout the film the lino is un-patterned, the solid grey tones and lack of a pattern is often associated with hospital design. A grey linoleum, originally developed for ship decks at the turn of the 20th century, was later taken up for use in hospitals and other institutional buildings and was referred to as "battleship linoleum" (Simpson, 1999, p. 22). In most domestic situations, at least until the 1960s, a patterned linoleum was used (Simpson, 1999, p. 23). What appears to be a solid grey coloured linoleum is used throughout most of the film to reflect and emphasise the sterile, hygienic and cold environment of the modern city.

One of the first glass curtain wall skyscraper office towers was Lever House in New York (1952), which Tati visited in 1958. Tati's visit to New York and Lever House had an influence on the set design of *Play Time*.[69] The Lever Brothers, who established their company in 1885, were soap manufacturers. The modern glass tower building was designed to appear as if it was made entirely of glass. Glass is renowned for its hygienic properties, as explored above, and so represents the cleansing and hygienic properties of the company's product. Zdatny notes that by "1960 France was the largest continental market for Lever Brother's detergents" (2012, p. 929) and as such it seems unlikely that the connections between Lever products, hygiene and glass would have gone unnoticed by Tati.

The apartments, the hotel room, and all the other buildings in modern Paris have large glass windows, to which no dirt can stick and remain unnoticed, even if it did exist in the modern city. The buildings in the film closely resemble Lever House (*see figures 5.2 and*

[69] The buildings in *Play Time* also show a resemblance to the work of other architects and urban designs, for example Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building (1958) in New York and Ludwig Hilberseimer's Vertical City (1924).

5.3). This building has a clear influence on Tati and his creation of *Play Time*—clean body, clean building, clean city.

Figure 5.2: Lever House New York (constructed 1952)
Photograph by Erza Stoller
Image source: https://www.som.com/projects/lever_house

Figure 5.3: Tati with Lever House 1958
Lever House has a similar appearance to the buildings in Play Time. Here Tati, when he visited New York in 1958, is standing on a construction site looking to Lever House,
Image source: Getty Images

The mannequin has no need for a toilet: The apartment scene

The inhabitants of the apartments appear like shop mannequins, the apartments have huge glass shop-like windows. The existence of any rooms beyond the living room, where a bathroom or toilet may be found, is ambiguous. Tati's discourse suggests that the modern city is lacking in almost every respect, in terms of the five senses with which we take in the world, except for that of the relatively clean sense of sight. It is easy to imagine that the apartments smell of fresh paint, vinyl chairs, and lingering hospital antiseptic.

The apartment scene begins with M. Hulot, a visitor to modern Paris, getting off a bus. An old army friend, M. Schneller, calls out to him from the other side of the street. Unlike the jerky movements of the office workers, in contrast M. Hulot almost lopes as he walks. He looks as if he might be off balance, but instead defies the point of gravity, and remains up right, most of the time. The two men stand talking outside the apartment. The conversation consists mostly of M. Schneller's recent acquisitions, the car, the apartment, the wrapped purchases M. Schneller gets out of his car—the modern citizen is not only clean but consumes. M. Hulot is invited in.

M. Hulot and his friend stop at two glass doors which open into a bare foyer. The two men stand on the doormat and wipe their feet. Our attention is drawn to this, first, by the soundtrack, an excessively loud scraping of feet on the doormat bristles is heard, and secondly, they stand there for longer than is necessary. Moreover, to emphasise this activity a whole new camera position is made. We go from the shot which frames the two in the foyer doorway to a wide shot of the apartment complex which shows M. Hulot and M. Schneller in the distance still wiping their feet on the mat. This performance, of what is usually a simple reflex activity, of wiping feet at the door, highlights the need for this modern city to be perpetually clean, while simultaneously suggesting that M. Hulot and his friend actually have no dirt to wipe off their shoes since the city is already and always utterly clean. We know this because within the first ten minutes of the film we twice see a cleaner with his dustpan and broom looking in vain for dirt to sweep up. The Paris of *Play Time* appears to be perpetually self-cleansing (Cairns, 2012, p. 102-10), including the humans, their minds and bodies.

M. Hulot and his friend enter the apartment from the foyer and find themselves in an entrance space divided from the rest of the living room by a partition. Here, they leave their hats, coats, and umbrellas. M. Hulot, however, keeps his coat on, conveying his reluctance to go in in the first place. The lounge room looks like a hospital waiting room, not a room for relaxing in with one's family and friends. As aforementioned, the design established in the opening scene of the hospital/airport carries on throughout the modern city. Here in the home the film viewer sees, along with the architectural design, the un-patterned linoleum flooring, the same chairs as seen at the hospital/airport and in the office district, and the institutional colour tones.

The lounge rooms of the apartments have huge shop-like windows, these windows are about displaying the correct behaviour of the ideal modern citizen, which plays a significant role in imposing control over the citizenry. As the furniture and fittings were once displayed as products in a shop window, they are now displayed in the apartment, viewed through the window, along with the inhabitants. The inhabitants are living with their commodities as in a fishbowl, demonstrating their clean and hygienic modern way of life. The ideal citizen must purchase, consume, and be clean—which is closely associated with being "well behaved", as discussed in Chapter Two. In the modern city one cannot hide in narrow filthy labyrinthine streets. These streets have been removed. Even the interior private space of the lounge room leaves no place to hide away from the gaze of the city. The modern residence has huge glass windows making sure the citizens behave as the dominant ideology dictates. The huge size of the window into the apartment from the street is emphasised by the army friend spreading his arms out to show its extent. Like shop windows, everything in the apartment is on display: the mannequin-like people—the lifeless creatures of the modern city—and all their purchases that were once displayed in a department store shop window are on display again, in what was once a relatively private realm of the home. This open display tells us that even at home, in spaces that were once private, the modern city asks its citizens to be clean and well behaved. In the modern city there are no underground, out of sight, places in which to plot a revolution (Reid, 1991, p. 20; Gandy, 1999, p. 24). The citizens live with the constant possibility of being watched by

one another, which plays a role—along with the abjectification of nature—in the city's control of its citizens' behaviour (Foucault, 1995; Gibson, 2013).

The two men having entered the apartment move around the partition into the living room space, where they are greeted by Mme. Schneller and the couple's teenage daughter. We see, at the mother's instance, both mother and daughter straightening up their already neat appearance. They are both smoothing out their hair and clothes. This movement emphasises the architecture where everything is smooth, pristine and in its place. The apartment has modern furnishings featuring neat geometric designs, as noted above. Moreover, we can see through the shop-like windows that all the other apartments contain interiors and furniture of a very similar design, only varying slightly, such as the green cigarette holder in the Schneller's apartment, which looks out of place with the rest of the furniture, indicating a note of individuality, but one so small it could easily go unnoticed. Not only are the apartments similar in their interior decoration and furnishings, but we can also see that in the neighbouring apartments the same behaviour repeated.

In each of the apartments the occupants all sit and watch the television. In turn, in each apartment, someone reads the television guide and gets up and moves towards the television, changes the channel and sits down again. The men on entering, returning home from a day's work at their office, remove their jackets and shirts. They all perform the same actions. The furniture, the apartments and the city are of one homogenous design, which, Tati suggests, results in the people in the modern city being of one homogenous demographic, all acting and thinking in the same way. Dirt and nature have been expelled, the people are only allowed to stay in the modern city if they regulate themselves, or as Tati suggests, if they allow the architecture to regulate them and their thoughts.

On the entrance of M. Hulot and his friend, the army friend's daughter soon vanishes behind the rear partition and reappears with plates of food. She appears to go into one of the more private service areas of the home, such as a kitchen. In walking behind the partition, it is implied that the way to the bathroom, toilet and bedrooms, would also be found by walking down the passage, which appears at the rear of the lounge room. There

may be a doorway which gives access to the other rooms. However, there is no evidence in the film as to whether these more private rooms do actually exist in the home; it could be that the film is suggesting that they do not. As the city sewer system and the other early modern infrastructure that supports water coming into and out of the city, was hidden away, underground and within walls (Kaika, 2005, p. 48)—in this modern city it seems that things have been taken a step further. The sewage infrastructure is hidden so deeply that it is experienced as almost nonexistence in the modern city—plumbing devices such as taps, toilets, the interface between the human and the larger sewer network—are only hinted at in the film and this is at the airport, before we reach the city. It is almost as if these plumbing devices no longer exist, because the ultra-clean mechanical bodies do not need them.

The ambiguous existence of any rooms beyond the living room is evident in artist Alice Tye's painting of the apartment scene, where she also brings the existence of the passage and room leading off it into question (*see figure 5.4*).[70] In the painting the space between the bottom edge of the beam and top of the partition is rendered black. The juncture where the black brush strokes meet the light grey paint creates a spatial ambiguity. The one wall plane is rendered in two distinctly different ways, rendering the two planes neither wholly one nor the other, and the disappearance of the passage. In rendering the painting this way, the passageway behind the partition disappears—so in this painting at least, there is no corridor or access way to get to any other rooms, should they be there.

Figure 5.4: Alice Tye's painting of the apartment scene
Image source: alicetye.com/Modernist-Architecture-in-film

[70] She completed the painting for a dissertation titled *Is modernist architecture used as visual shorthand for malevolent characters in popular films?*

A further representation of this scene, which also brings into question the existence of the kitchen, bedrooms, bathroom or toilet, can be found in a magazine called *Interiors: An online publication about architecture and film* by Mehruss Jon Ahi and Armen Karaoghlanian (*see figure 5.5*). Their September 2012 issue features the apartment scene from *Play Time*. The elevation diagram allows for the possibility of a corridor to exist which leads to the private rooms of the apartment. However, the plan diagram renders without question that the corridor leads nowhere. This could possibly be a drawing of a set only, but rather it seems that it is a drawing of the diegetic world of modern Paris as depicted in *Play Time* because in reading through the online publication it does not seem that the authors are particularly interested in the sets themselves but the world that the film creates.

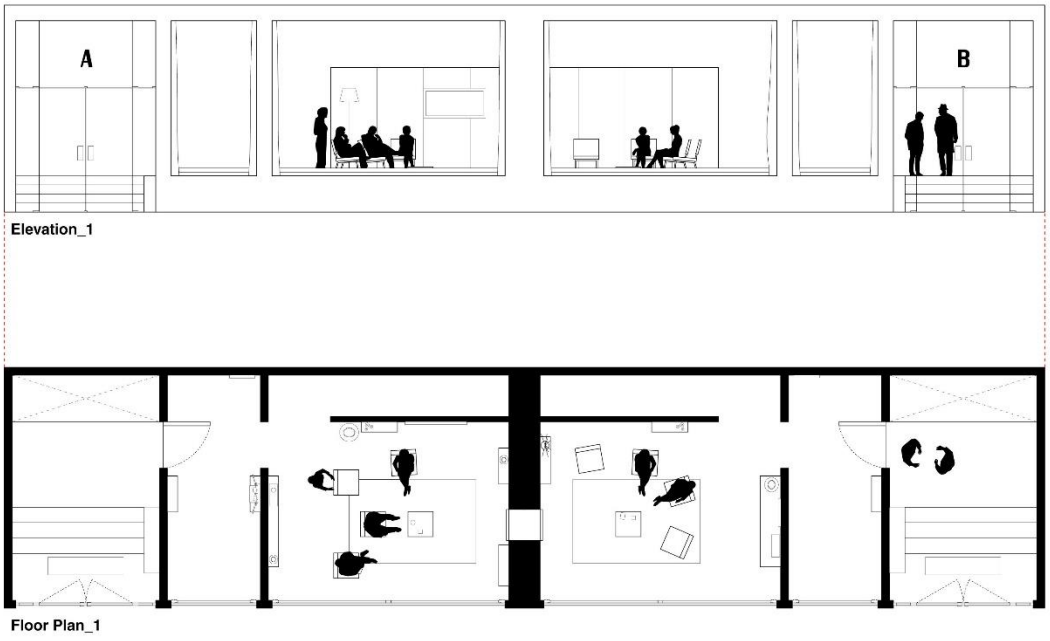

Figure 5.5: Apartment scene plan and elevation by Interiors, Mehruss Jon Ahi and Armen Karaoghlanian. Interiors: An online publication about architecture and film—drawings of the apartment scene in Play Time Image source: Mehruss Jon Ahi and Armen Karaoghlanian www.intjournal.com

In the apartment scene, there are 20 camera positions, only six of which the camera either pans or tracks. Each time the camera tracks or pans it moves with the characters. In one case it moves to the character—M. Giffard at his front door with his friend talking about his broken nose. The 14 still camera positions are static and rigid like the modern architecture; the remaining six camera positions move with the human characters, who have

to make their way through the geometric modern architecture. The times when the camera moves with the character are poetic and emotionally moving. Maybe because in an inhuman world such as modern Paris this tracking and panning with the characters gives a hint that the film is with them, on their side, while they remain trapped within their lifeless homes, constituted by the harsh and hard yet hygienic surfaces and uncomfortable furniture.

M. Hulot watches the television with the Schnellers and they all watch the neighbours—through the television, the film implies. M. Hulot also watches holiday films with the Schnellers; a projector and screen are brought out. M. Hulot becomes trapped in this antiseptic home, he looks uneasy and makes gestures to leave. Eventually M. Hulot he does leave the apartment, having said goodbye to all. Mme. Schneller and the daughter leave the lounge room. M. Schneller begins to undress, while we see the neighbour, Mme. Giffard, watching him undress through the television set, as depicted in Alice Tye's painting—again this emphasises that everyone is watching everyone in the modern city, even when in private, through the large glass windows and the television sets. M. Schneller hears M. Hulot in the darkened foyer. M. Schneller goes to the foyer and finds M. Hulot actually trapped, he explains that there is a button, which releases the door. Finally, M. Hulot escapes the apartment, getting away from the quietly disturbing modern home and its modern and model citizens. However, he is still in the modern city.

Barbara as ghost: The hotel room scene

The two domestic scenes have a short linking sequence involving M. Hulot. As he walks away from the apartments, where he has just been to visit his old army friend, the film cuts to M. Hulot in another street gazing up to what might be Barbara, the American tourist's, hotel room. These two scenes are not only linked sequentially but Tati places them together spatially. In the apartment scene we can see tall buildings beyond with flashing blue neon signs, the same ones are seen outside Barbara's window. Connecting the two scenes in this way adds another tenuous link between Barbara and M. Hulot, links we have seen during the film. At this stage in the film Barbara and M. Hulot have not yet met, although they will meet later that evening at the Royal Garden nightclub.

This second domestic scene is set in the hotel room, where Barbara is getting ready to go out for the evening. She has changed out of her day clothes into a dressing gown. The suggestion might be that she has just showered, but there is no evidence of this in the film. We do not see a bathroom or even a wash basin. This segment of the film is the closest we get to any evidence that in modern Paris the body may emit substances which need to be cleaned away. Significantly Barbara is not a Parisian but a foreign visitor. Perhaps the bathroom is down the hall, however, as in the apartment scene, it seems that the bathroom, toilet, taps, pipes and sewers that they lead to are no longer necessary in the modern building because modern bodies appear more to be machine-like than human.

The design of the hotel room and its contents plays a role in emphasising the hard-edged, geometric, ultra-hygienic, highly controlled, and inhuman environment of modern Paris. On the table are Barbara's belongings—her suitcase and handbag, with their contents spread about. These items are the few things, apart from Barbara herself, in the hotel room which provide relief from the rigid geometry. The hotel room is rectilinear and generally grey in colour, with modern fittings and furnishings displaying geometric forms. It is clean and hygienic. A radio resembling and emphasising the geometric buildings of the city sits on a rectilinear glass table. It has a small potted plant—nature captured and tamed, or perhaps it is conveniently plastic—not ageing, unable to drop leaves and make a mess. There is a telephone table where a drawer may sit but there is none, the room offers no place to tidy away one's personal possessions. The autocratic city does not allow for private things and the thoughts they may embody. Furthermore, it appears Barbara has failed to adapt to the modern architecture, by bringing her effects with her, as there is nowhere to put them. A low rectilinear black table with steel legs sits against the left-hand wall of the hotel room, on which Barbara places her things untidily.

This environment is not only artificial, but revels in the unnatural. Next to the table are three black chairs—these are the same chairs that appeared in the offices and apartments earlier in the film. Barbara's grey coat lies casually over one of them. The bed has sharp rectilinear edges and a triangular pillow. There is a table attached to its side which creates a neat right angle as it hangs over the bed. Although it is made out of two square

pieces of painted wood, it resembles the dinner table over a hospital bed. There are three long pendant lights, with cylindrical metal shades. Two metallic rectangles are on the wall above and to the right of the bedhead, that could be controls for providing artificial and mechanical temperature, air and lighting. The artificial air and lighting create an unnatural environment. The building is sealed off from its exterior environment.

The hotel scene with Barbara is short yet telling. It encapsulates much of what the film is saying in less than a minute—this antiseptic city is an unnatural environment, disconnecting humans from nature, each other and themselves. The scene begins with her approaching the radio, an advertisement is playing for a product called "Quick Cleaner" which alludes to the film's critique of the ultra-clean buildings. As Barbara turns the radio off, the camera is inside the hotel room—whereas in the following sequence the camera is outside—the rest of the scene is viewed by looking in through the hotel room window. Often in the cinema peering in through a window into someone's private space is overtly menacing, however, here in modern Paris the surveillance appears to be so thorough and expected that it goes almost unnoticed.

Spatially, the camera's position is also quite unusual. Barbara's hotel room is many storeys above ground, and the room lacks a balcony; if the camera does hold the audience's point of view at this point, then what are we standing on? The spatial ambiguity lends itself to the possibility of a surveillance camera. We change from being inside the room with Barbara to being outside watching her, as the people in the buildings opposite would be able to do. Like the apartments everything in the hotel room, including Barbara, is on display, willingly or not. It is not a private space and in some ways reminiscent of the influential novel *We* by the Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin first published in 1924. In the city in this novel not only are the walls glass, but the floors and ceilings as well. It is a dystopian city with one autocratic leader, in a highly controlled environment, where all the citizens are on view, all the time.[71]

[71] The influence of the novel can be seen in films such as *THX 1138* (1971), *Logan's run* (1976), *Brave new world* (1980) and *1984* (1956 and 1984).

As Barbara switches off the radio the camera is behind and slightly to her side. She then moves out of shot, and the camera draws backwards, and here something very significant happens—Barbara appears as a ghost. The camera lingers with a ghostly image of Barbara. Her reflection is seen in the modern glass architecture. At this point Barbara is immaterial, existing only in image—the threat of the messiness of the human body has been removed and the order and cleanliness of the modern city sustained. Barbara's wraith-like appearance is disembodied, she is lost to all the senses but that of sight (*see figure 5.6*).

Figure 5.6: Barbara as ghost
Image source: Still from Play Time: PlayTime, Jacques Tati (1967) © Les Films de Mon Oncle – Specta Films CEPEC

The ghostly, clean Barbara appears in the reflection on the glass window of her hotel room, with the ideal modern body for the modern city. Even in the short time Barbara has been in modern Paris the city has had an insidious effect. The city has assimilated Barbara and made her of itself. Like the old tourist sights/sites it just the image of the modern body which is happily accepted in the modern city, not the bodily self, not the bodily fluids and odours which threaten to disrupt the highly ordered and ultra-hygienic modern city.

The Eiffel Tower, and other tourist sights/sites as reflection

Barbara is represented in the same way the Eiffel Tower is earlier in the film, as immaterial. As she opens a glass door within a glass wall she notices the reflection of the

Eiffel Tower. The historic sites existing only in image are separated from their filthy and disordered 19th-century context. They appear to exist now only in an image within the context of modern Paris. In *Play Time* there are only four images of existing, real sites that appear. These are the images of the four tourist sights/sites of Paris reflected off the modern glass architecture: the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Place de la Concorde and Sacre Coeur (*see figure 5.7*). These buildings and monuments are well known to most tourists before they arrive in Paris—via snapshots, postcards and media of mass communication, for example newspapers, magazines and movies. They constitute the Paris the American tourists have come to see, but it is questionable if they ever visit the actual sites. The film viewer does not see the tourists approach or physically enter the sites. These sites are lost to us within the context of the film, no longer graspable. They are now only available to the human sense of sight, that is, they now only exist in image. The film viewer only ever sees these particular tourist attractions, as stated, in reflection off the modern glass architecture. The reflections in their immateriality and impermanence throw the historical city of Paris as we knew it into a questionable space. The fleeting nature of these reflected images occurs because of the light changing throughout the day and the fact that two of the images of the tourist sights are on doors so the reflection changes with the movement of the door.

Figure 5.7: The four the historic tourist sights/sites reflected off the modern architecture.
Image Source: Stills from Play Time, montage created by author: Image source: Still from Play Time: PlayTime, Jacques Tati (1967) © Les Films de Mon Oncle – Specta Films CEPEC

The four images of Paris that Tati chose for the film are well known. These particular attractions are not places with specific functions, as such, except for Sacre Coeur which has an obvious religious function, but are statements of wealth and power. As well as being places to see, they are all places to see from—to take in views of Paris itself. When completed in 1836, the Arc de Triomphe offered an aerial view over much of Paris; at 45 metres it was taller than most other structures. The Eiffel Tower, completed in 1889, is still one of the tallest structures in Paris. Sacre Coeur is on a hill in a relatively flat city; the church looks over Paris. From the Place de la Concord the vistas down the famous straight boulevards are taken in. This square was developed in 1775, and originally named the Place Louis XV. The buildings surrounding the square are spectacular, demonstrating the wealth of the aristocracy; during the revolution it held the grim spectacle of the guillotine. Furthermore, the open space and large scale of the square in relation to the dense urban fabric surrounding it is a spectacle in itself. *Play Time* questions sight in relation to the experience of the modern city.

In mapping these sites on a street layout of Paris it reveals that it is possible to locate these tangible sites. It may be thought that perhaps the reflections of these four places locate the Paris of *Play Time*—that is, its location can be determined by following the lines of reflection, therefore the new city is somewhere on the edge of the existing city, such as La Defence. It could be thought that the Paris depicted in the film is new part of the city—a Parisian suburb outside the city's periphery, but in the film we are repeatedly reminded that this is Paris—within the city boundaries (*see figure 5.8*).

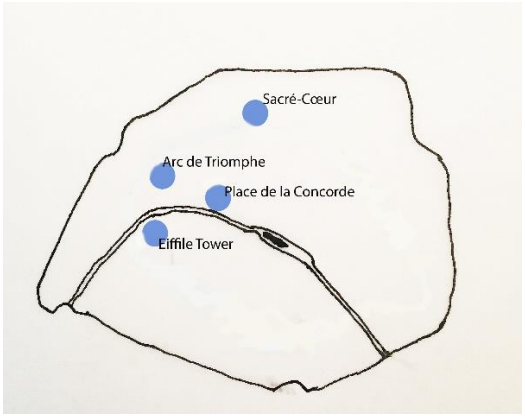

Figure 5.8: Physical Locations of the tourist sights/sites in Paris that are seen in Play Time, Eiffel Tower; Place de la Concorde; Arc de Triomphe; Sacre Coeur
Image source: Diagrammatic plan of Paris by author

In the film, when the American women tourists arrive, there is nothing visible that resembles historic Paris; but in the airport car park, from their bus the word "Paris" can be seen written on the front of the airport building. The word "Paris" also appears on the road, with arrows pointing the direction to it, as the tourists travel in from the airport. There are graphic representations and souvenir statuettes of the Eiffel Tower throughout the film. These elements give an indication that the tourists have arrived in and are visiting Paris. Mid-way through the film the tourists go on a bus trip to Montmartre and Montparnasse. Along with the other American tourists Barbara has come to see the traditional tourist sights of historic Paris, however we the viewers only ever see these sites caught as reflections in the modern glass architecture of the new city, moreover it is not entirely clear if the tourists actually see them either—we do not see the tourists physically at the sites. However, the film viewer does not go there with them, that is, we as film viewers do not know what these sections of Paris look like—we can only assume that all of Paris consists of modern glass and steel architecture as this is all that is shown to us of Paris. The old monuments of traditional Paris are presented as intangible in *Play Time*. Later in the film, beyond the reflections, the film viewer is made aware of historic Paris when M. Hulot looks out across the city from a balcony—through a field of modern glass towers. Looking into the distance the film viewer and M. Hulot see what appears to be the Eiffel Tower; but only an outline of the tower is visible, the rest of the city, beyond the crystal towers which are in the foreground of the shot, is not defined. Perhaps the Eiffel Tower stands in isolation, or is just simply forgotten by the modern city, a relic of the past, standing as a ruin or a distant ghostly memory of M. Hulot. In the film the only tangible part of historic Paris that remains in the Paris of *Play Time* is one small monument, barely noticed. In the isolation of fragments and with the interplay of the reflections Paris has disappeared. Tati structures the film *Play Time* in such a way that historic Paris has been superseded by a new world.

Conclusion

In Paris in the 1950s being clean began to be associated with being modern (Zdatny, 2012, p. 898). In *Play Time* the modern architecture of Paris is shown as ultra-hygienic. The Paris of Tati's childhood and youth has vanished—the iconic historical monuments have been transformed into images. Traditional Paris is no longer material, it can no longer be

experienced with the messiness and exhilaration of all the human senses. The sensory engagement with the whole of life experience in the city of Paris prior to World War II is no longer possible in the ultra-hygienic modern city shown in the film.

This chapter has argued that the bodily functions threaten the modern city, therefore the people have been diminished to such a point that the now antiseptic modern bodies no longer pose a threat to the cleanliness and order of the city. The modern citizens are barely human. The design of modern Paris has impacted significantly on the people who live there and even those who visit temporarily—the people are represented in the film as automatons, shop window mannequins, cut-outs and ghosts—the ideal modern body is an image, reflected off the modern glass architecture, and it is an image type that is only temporary. Like the 19th century Paris monuments, the image of the body is permissible in the modern city; and like the actual city of Paris with its ripe and sometimes messy context, the human body—with its natural functions, defecating, sweating, bleeding, and its potentially unpredictable behaviour—disturbs the modern city. The following chapter explores common themes found within *Play Time* and the horror film genre; it explores M. Hulot as a monster who breaks the control of the modern city embedded within the corporate modern architecture.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HORROR FILM GENRE, NATURE, BODIES, SPACE, MONSTERS AND *PLAY TIME*

Introduction

The stringent cleanliness and absence of nature in *Play Time* creates a quietly disturbing urban environment. However, the modern citizens in the film do not seem to notice, it is only the film viewers who experience this city with an underlying fear. In this chapter *Play Time* is read through themes found in the horror film genre and M. Hulot is read as a benevolent monster. Reading the film in this way contributes to revealing the hidden mechanisms of control the modern city has over its citizens. The themes found in common in the horror film genre and *Play Time* that will be discussed here are nature, the body including the senses, space—at least the boundaries that define space—and the monster. This chapter argues, in using these themes, that it is M. Hulot who is the monster in *Play Time* and not the modern city as the film viewer might first expect. The modern architecture in *Play Time*, which constitutes the modern city of Paris, embeds within it the capitalist ideology that controls the modern citizens, and it is M. Hulot as monster who breaks down this control.

Nature, destruction, the horror film and *Play Time*

The horror film genre is founded in nature, argue the scholars of English and Communications, respectively, Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann in *Monstrous Nature: Environment and horror on the big screen* (2016, p. xiii). Their book explores the relationship between human and non-human nature in the horror film. They investigate the idea of nature as monster, incarnations such as gigantic bugs and maniacal trees, for example. The premise of their book is that in a great many horror films nature is seeking its revenge for the appalling way the environment has been treated by humanity. The authors propose that film studies scholars Paul Wells and Noel Carroll have also made this connection between nature and the horror film, but little has been written about the subject. However, Murray and Heumann write that for Wells, the horror film addresses humanity's interference with evolution, humans manipulating nature to suit their needs, often at the expense of nature (2016, p. xiii) and for Carroll, the authors write, monsters are

a disruption of the natural world, and one method for creating the monster is joining human and non-human natures (Murray and Heumann, 2016, p. xiii-xiv).

M. Hulot is not a disruption of the natural world, in the sense of joining a mushroom and a human, as is the case of *Matango* (1963), neither is he the revengeful nature of the nuclear mutant, as is the case of *Godzilla* (1954). However, M. Hulot does represent the nature that is beyond the modern city boundary, he brings nature back to the modern city, and it is this that the modern citizen finds disturbing and threatening, and as we shall see, disgusting.

The Oxford English Dictionary, online, provides two definitions for nature. [72] One definition notes that the word "nature" means the characteristics of a person or a thing. The other definition states that the meaning of nature is "plants and animals", trees, bears and dogs, for example—things that are not human.[73] The split between humans and nature is one of the central themes in *Play Time*. In the film the denial that humans are not only connected to, but are also a part of nature, is expressed in the absence of nature, which has now become abject. Our connection with nature or disconnection from nature is interrelated with the vast destruction of nature we as humans have undertaken, especially in the modern period. The destruction of nature increased significantly from the Industrial Revolution onwards. Nature became other, argues author and environmentalist, Emma Marris. She puts forward that nature became forests, the wilderness, something almost inaccessible and far away from our machine-built cities (Marris, 2011, p. 1). Marris also states that within our cities we have further disconnected nature from ourselves because we have chosen to define the nature we do have around in the urban environment as non-nature.

The theme of nature being a part of city life and humans themselves being a part of nature is a central argument in *Play Time*. In Michel Foucault's 1977-78 lectures *Security, Territory, Population*, he suggests that in the 18th century suddenly the natural state of

[72] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nature

[73] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nature

humanity found itself in the artifice of the town (2007, p. 37). Essentially Foucault argues that during the 18th century, due to technical, political, and economic changes a divide was created between city and nature. While Foucault acknowledges that the term a "sudden emergence" is "excessive"[74], the statement demonstrates Foucault's point that due to technical/mechanical developments, in large European cities at least, people found themselves in a different relationship to nature. In *Play Time* the human naturalness Foucault speaks of has been almost completely extinguished by the artifice of the modern city.

Chapter Two of this thesis explored a further division between nature and the city which occurred during the modernisation of the Paris sewer system by Haussmann in the mid-19th century (Gandy, 1999). In the early 20th century there developed a "… categorical boundary between humans and animals, [that was] … fiercely defended as a tenet of modernity" (Franklin, 1999, p. 3). The philosopher Bert Olivier argues that modernisation can be read fundamentally as a destructive action on nature (2007, p. 447-448). He writes that "…by and large, [Western] humanity has maintained an extremely negative, suspicious, and repressive attitude towards the natural world—including the human body…" (Olivier, 2007, p. 447-448).

That a great number of people in the late 20th century found being in nature fearful and disgusting is the topic explored by the social researchers, Robert D. Bixler and Myron F. Floyd, in their 1997 essay "Nature is scary, disgusting and uncomfortable". Their study, undertaken in America, focuses on a group of students from the city who very rarely, if ever, go to the wilderness. Why is it, the authors ask, do people find the wilderness and recreational parks scary? They conclude that the individuals in their research view the wilderness as dangerous, for example fearing snake and spider bites, and as uncomfortable and dirty (Bixler and Floyd, 1997, pp. 462-463). The researchers wanted to undertake this study to determine how they might encourage people to get over their fear and disgust of nature and visit wilderness parks (1997).

[74] The editors state that in Foucault's manuscript, in the hand-written notes on the lectures, he acknowledges that the term a "sudden emergence" is "excessive".

The aim of Bixler and Floyd was to encourage city people to spend time in nature, as they believe it offers a myriad of benefits for people's wellbeing. Moreover, disconnection from nature can have harmful effects. Tim Beatley, planner and Peter Newman, environmental scientist, state that humans benefit both physically and mentally from being around nature (2013, p. 3328).

> There is a growing recognition of the need for daily contact with nature, to live happy, productive, meaningful lives. Recent attention to biophilic design among architects and designers acknowledges this power of nature (Beatley & Newman, 2013, p. 3328).

Beatley and Newman insist that good design of the built environment requires the inclusion of natural elements. In referring to the work of biologist Edward O. Wilson, they note that connection with nature for humans is related to our evolution (Beatley & Newman, 2013, p. 3329). The human species has spent tens of thousands of years living with trees, plants and animals and it is only relatively recently that we have settled in towns and cities, and only in the post-World War II period that we have begun to live and especially work in buildings that are completely cut off from the natural environment, buildings that only provide artificial air with limited natural light.[75] This is the building type we see relentlessly repeated throughout *Play Time*. The city is depicted as beautiful but in stripping nature from the city a harsh environment has been created that does not support the health and wellbeing of its citizens.

The removal of nature from the city creates a disconnection between humans and the natural world of which they are inherently a part. It is this absence which contributes to creating the inhumane experience of modern Paris depicted in the film. The film suggests that humans have more in common with animals than this city. Tati is not suggesting with *Play Time* that there has been a sudden disappearance of nature from the actual city of Paris. The hyperbolic display of the absence of nature in *Play Time* is a way of Tati stating his

[75] The buildings in *Play Time* have an abundance of glass, however buildings of this type often require artificial lighting, as, for example, the floor plate may be too deep and so the windows/glass walls are unable to light the entire floor, or the blinds may have to be closed to prevent glare or to reduce the heat load.

concern for the rapid urban modernisation of the actual city of Paris, and what he fears Paris may ultimately become.

The body in the horror film and *Play Time*

Many films within the horror genre are about that which is inside the body transgressing the boundaries of the body. Bodily materials transgressing the body's boundary are depicted in certain films within the horror film genre, while others show an infection or colonisation of the mind, thoroughly controlling the body's behaviour—but leaving the human body intact. In films such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, 1978), there is a similarity between the pod-creatures and the automatons in *Play Time*. Once the pod-creatures have completed their transition and taken over the human body, the people look the same as they did before their bodies were invaded. The human bodies remain intact, but their minds and behaviour are utterly controlled by an unseen power. More violently, in *The Stepford Wives* (1975), the sinister and controlling husbands have replaced the insides of their human wives with machinery. The exterior of the human body remains intact so that from the outside, to all given appearances, the women look as they did before, they still look like the individuals they have replaced, but their bodies contain only mechanisms: they have become mechanical robots—with a human appearance. All the blood and guts of the wives, the emotions, feelings and independence of mind has gone. The fembots in *The Stepford Wives* have a human appearance but are boneless and bloodless. The authors Jessica Johnston and Cornelia Sears argue that,

> … the Stepford husbands kill and replace their wives with man-made robotic doubles, the final scene is filled with abject horror as the soulless fembots enact domestic bliss gliding gracefully around the grocery aisles (2011, p. 75).

In *The Stepford Wives,* the viewer does not see the bloody murder of the women, the viewer only sees the mechanical replacements, the bloodless and obedient fembots. Throughout *Play Time* the bodily presence of living beings is reduced to cardboard cut-outs and even a ghost—boneless, fleshless, bloodless.

In *Play Time* the presence of humankind disturbs the modern architecture because of the body's potential to infect the city with its internal fluids and solids—the built environment is rejecting of the body and its human messiness, as outlined in Chapter Five. The human citizens within the film are reduced to simulacra. The modern architecture and urbanism in *Play Time* finds humanity abhorrent, odious, repugnant, repellent, offensive—the individuals who live within the city are crushed by this sterile atmosphere, with their senses dulled, they are reduced to automatons, to mere cut-out photographic representations of humans and ultimately as ghosts. The modern environment has been reduced; it is one that emphasises sight over the other senses.

The sterilisation of the senses and the citizen controlled

In *Play Time*, the absence of nature contributes to the creation of an environment that provides a severely limited capacity for sensory stimuli. Sensory stimuli are a hugely important factor in the experience of the city—the lack of it in this modern city creates a dull and, therefore, malleable people. The grit, the noise, the smells, and other sensory input available in the actual city of Paris at the time this film was made, are not available in the modern city of Paris depicted in the film. The citizens' senses have atrophied, their intellectual, sexual and creative energy is dulled (Wood, 1979), their choice, consciously or otherwise, to conform to the bourgeois ideal means they can more easily be manipulated by the dominant ideology, the capitalist patriarchy controlling the city through means including the relentless repetition of glass and steel rectilinear modern buildings.

The limited sensory environment of the modern city of Paris is reflected not only in the buildings, but in the grey palette used in the first two thirds of the film. This grey palette is seen throughout the modern city, used both externally and internally for the interiors of the buildings, as examined in Chapter Five. It is also the predominant colour that the citizens wear. The limited sensory environment is also reflected in what people eat. The food in the modern city is depicted as tasteless, we see this when M. Hulot walks into a pharmacy which also provides ready-made meals, the food is green from the green neon cross of the pharmacy sign. The food has been sterilised in the way of modern medicine. Tati stated in a May 1958 interview,

> In the past, everything had a flavour. I remember going to shop at a delicatessen once with my grandmother: there was some sawdust on the floor, they cut us thin slices of salami to give us a taste of it, the room smelled deliciously of oak and pepper. Today, when you go to a restaurant it's as if you were eating in a clinic;… Snack bars seem to be have been created so that you can stand at attention even when you're eating—your whole life through, as a matter of fact (Bazin and Truffaut, 2002, pp. 296–297).

Tati is making an association between the sterility of the modern pharmacy and modern hospitals, and the sterility of our everyday necessity, food, being robbed of its natural essence (*see figure 6.1*). All the sensual engagement and pleasure has been taken out of one of our fundamental needs: the daily activity of eating. The film indicates that in Paris during the post-war period, increasingly, one not only stands at attention while eating, but one now stands, metaphorically, and psychologically, at attention at all times, even during activities such as eating, which traditionally indulged all of the senses.

Figure 6.1: Hulot in the snack bar/pharmacy
Image source: Still from Play Time: PlayTime, Jacques Tati (1967) © Les Films de Mon Oncle – Specta Films CEPEC

The absence of nature, including the natural functions of the human body, contributes to this delimited sensory environment. Nature can provide elements such as

smells, sometimes unpleasant; a variation in texture, temperature, shape and form to the city, all of which are absent in the homogenised, unnatural modern city. Tati makes an association between limited engagement with nature through the senses and a controlled urban environment. The modern citizens "stand at attention" because they want to remain in the modern city, and by doing so affirm their belonging to the dominant social group, the bourgeoisie. They cannot relax and act as individuals. Just as the buildings in modern Paris are homogenous so are the people, their sameness creates order and eliminates chaos.

Space: Boundaries, transgression, isolation & exclusion

In *Play Time* the city's boundaries and borders not only define the physical and social space but they also create an isolated and controlling space. This isolated and controlling space is established by both tangible and intangible boundaries and borders, and importantly their transgression. In the actual city of Paris, the boundary is largely marked by the Boulevard Périphérique, a massive multi-lane highway surrounding the city. Construction began in the late 1950s and was completed in the early 1970s, occurring concurrently with other urban modernisation works of Paris in the post-World War II period.

When Tati was aged from 11 years to 21 years old, during the 1920s, the Thiers Wall surrounding Paris was demolished. This was the last defensive medieval wall around Paris; the Boulevard Périphérique sits on much the same location and like the defensive wall it must be crossed at specific points. The physical transition across the Boulevard Périphérique into Paris is much like that of the old city gates of the various Parisian defensive walls—one has to enter the city at certain points. The city boundary is clearly marked. One knows where the city boundary is and when it is crossed.

In the horror film, often the main action, the situation where the horrible things take place, is spatially isolated. This is a space where terrifying events occur, which threaten the individual in that space with the meaninglessness of life (Kristeva, 1982). The main characters go to a place where they encounter monstrous creatures and or situations, a space where the characters are trapped. At the end of the film, the characters, or those who remain, return to a location of safety, but not always. The film scholar Noel Carroll argues that the geography of the horror film happens outside of known places, outside "ordinary

social life" and "outside cultural categories" (Carroll, 1987, p. 57). Carroll refers to these spaces as the "geography of horror stories" (1987, p. 57).

The isolated spaces in the horror film genre can be, for example, a desert, as in *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), or the arctic, in *The Thing (1982).* It could be a form of residence seen in films such as *The Old Dark House* (1932), *The Bat* (1959) or *The Black Cat* (1934). Or the isolated space could be a small town, seen for example in *The Stepford Wives* (1975) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, 1978). Or it could be an island, as seen in films such as *White Zombie* (1932), *Island of Lost Souls* (1932), *King of the Zombies* (1941), *Teenage Zombies* (1959), and *Matango* (1963). In *Play Time,* the modern citizens do not seem to view the modern city as a trapped space. It is the film viewer who realises that while on the surface this modern city is exclusive, only for the modern bourgeoise, it is actually one of entrapment.

The film *La Horde* (2009) also demonstrates the boundary between the city of Paris and suburbs. The film is set in a Grand Ensemble apartment tower in the suburbs of Paris. It becomes the horror house where the characters become trapped, the horde in the film are zombies. The grand ensembles are the tower blocks that were a modern housing solution in the post-World War II period. The towers significantly transformed the urban, suburban and rural landscapes of the Paris region and shaped and formed the way that people lived—the deleterious effects of which are still being felt today. This Grand Ensemble, the viewer is told during the film, was built in the late 1970s. Now for the most part it is abandoned, waiting for demolition. It only has a few remaining residents and a kind of building guard, a heavily armed concierge.

La Horde opens in a cemetery at the funeral for a police officer. Here, friends and colleagues plan to go to the grand ensemble to seek revenge upon the criminal gang responsible for their friend's death. In a bungled attack, the gang manages to capture all the police in one tiny room within an apartment. However, after some violent interaction between the two groups it becomes apparent that there is a greater threat to both groups—zombies. The police and gang, after losing many members, eventually form a team to fight

them. Having expelled the zombies from the grand ensemble the group takes time to reflect in the apartment of one of the remaining residents. Looking out the window and across the suburbs to the city of Paris, they see something that looks like a war zone; in the suburbs there are many fires that can be seen in the darkness and there are thousands, perhaps millions of zombies. The characters now find themselves isolated within the housing tower.

In getting the TV to finally work, there is news that the city, the centre of Paris, has been cordoned off and a military zone created, a clear boundary established. It is safe within the city and unsafe without. In hearing this one of the characters remarks that it is typical that the city has taken care of itself and abandoned the suburbs, highlighting the deeply entrenched divide between the two. The characters in the tower, who are not wealthy, are now also separated from central Paris. The city has been reduced to a military base, it is a controlling and controlled environment. All through the film there are juxtapositions created by boundaries and borders both physical and intangible: the characters are either inside or outside of the group, inside or outside of the building, and finally in the case of this film, inside or outside Paris.

In *Play Time* the city boundary not only defines social and physical space but also creates an isolated and controlling space. In the film the boundaries and their transgression play a significant role in creating the divide between nature and the modern city. Even though the viewer does not see the city boundary in the film we are repeatedly reminded throughout that this city is Paris, and we know the actual city of Paris has a significant boundary between it and that which is not Paris. In this city all its people are ultra-clean, free of the dirt nature brings. It is the threat of being expelled beyond the city boundary that controls the modern citizens. Within the city, this threat of exclusion is a punishment which itself will result from the transgression of boundaries—from the clean to unclean. Hence every citizen must be ultra-clean, and as machine-like as possible to remain. This city threatens expulsion, it threatens exclusion.

The whole of the modern city in *Play Time* is contained within a controlled space. The characters' use of the space is controlled by a threat, in many cases in the horror film it is a

physical threat, often a threat to life. In *Play Time* the threat is of social death—exclusion from the city—the threat of which is almost as frightening as the threat of losing life. The citizens of modern Paris in *Play Time* are completely controlled by an unseen hand—much like the alien seed creatures in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, 1978), who have taken control of people's bodies. In *Play Time* it is the modern architecture that entraps the people in their bodies, controlling their minds. Here the unseen hand has a sinister control over all aspects of the modern corporate city. Its controlling power is gained through social and political mechanisms. Embedded within this architecture is a political system which is the source of power.

Paris as it appears in *Play Time* is isolated, socially and physically, from the suburbs which surround it.[76] It is as if the modern city exists in a bubble, a clean soap bubble perhaps. M. Hulot, the American tourists, and the workers, represent the existence of the threatening space beyond the city boundary. The working class, the tourists, and M. Hulot are outsiders in the modern city, and do not belong there. At night the working class leave the city. They go beyond the city boundary, back to nature, where the flowers for the "traditional Parisian" flower stall are grown. It is unlikely the workers could afford to live in the modern apartments, the film viewer is shown during the apartment scene that all the apartments in modern Paris are the same—that is, all housing in the modern city is that of the modern bourgeois. The viewer knows that M. Hulot and the American tourists have only recently arrived in modern Paris and do not live here permanently. The tourists stay in the temporary accommodation of the hotel, and M. Hulot does not sleep here at all.

Monsters as disruptors of normality, transgression, and M. Hulot

M. Hulot can be read as the monster in *Play Time*. In the film, M. Hulot may well elicit disgust and fear in the modern Parisian bourgeoisie in that he represents the unclean, and the old city of Paris beyond the modern city's boundary. He is an outsider, a transgressor of social boundaries. M. Hulot dresses differently to the modern bourgeois citizen. He is not

[76] Conversely, the real city of Paris is not isolated but in many respects is not only considered to be the centre of France, but at times has been thought of as the centre of the world, especially concerning elements such as fashion, art, and modernity, as texts such as the following indicate, for example, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* by David Harvey (2006), *Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century* by Walter Benjamin published in 1935, and *Paris: Capital of the World* by Patrice L.-R. Higonnet (2002).

wearing a well-cut business suit, but wears pants that are slightly too short, and an ill-fitting overcoat. This is the third film in which M. Hulot appears, we know the character from the film *Mr Hulot's Holiday* (1953) and *Mon Oncle* (1958). In these two films he constantly causes, among the bourgeoisie, acts of transgression, causing mayhem. In *Play Time*, the acts of social transgression are not as evident, until M. Hulot ultimately breaks down the modern architecture causing chaos, which is discussed below. The monster is a disruptor of normality, argues Robin Wood, and this is the role M. Hulot plays in the film. Wood argues that part of the cathartic experience of the horror film is achieved through the juxtaposition of the monster and what is considered to be normal.

In horror films, monsters come in various types, shapes and sizes. A monster can be a mythical figure such as *Dracula* (1931) or a hideous collage of various human body parts as in *Frankenstein* (1935). Monsters have appeared as nuclear mutants, massive reptiles (*Godzilla*, 1955) or bugs (*Them,* 1954). Sometimes monsters are people who dress up as creatures (*The Bat,* 1923, 1959). Monsters can also be humans joined with other life forms, such as the mushroomoid creatures (*Matango*, 1963). The 1960 film *Psycho* introduced not only bloody violence (Prince, 2004, p. 4) to the horror film genre but also, argues film theorist Carol Clover, introduced the monster figures as "insiders", or at least appearing to be insiders, "normal", at first until, as in the case of Norman Bates in the murderous and bloody shower scene (2015, p. 30), the monster is revealed. Clover also argues that another type of monster was first presented in films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and *Halloween* (1978), here, the monsters' role as killer is presented from the outset, furthermore, unlike many previous monsters, they appear to be human, yet still "only marginally"; the "killers are superhuman", almost indestructible (2015, p. 30). As discussed above monsters can invade the human being, leaving their bodies intact, while taking over their minds. In *Play Time* it is M. Hulot who has the independent mind and the modern bourgeois citizens who appear to act mindlessly. Bourgeoisie represent the "norm" in the modern city. M. Hulot as the benevolent monster disturbs that normality.

The monster is an outsider. Robin Wood maintains that in the monster are held notions "…of the repressed and the Other …" (1979, p. 11). The author Ruth Waterhouse

also argues "monsters are Other, as contrasted with the subjectivity of Self that classes them as alien … while an aura of mystery also surrounds them" (Waterhouse, 1996, p. 28). Monsters are, argues film academic Peter Hutchings, threatening—but so are villains in other genres—therefore a horror monster he states is not only threatening, but must also be disgusting, "impure" (2004, p. 34-35). The monster can look and smell bad, film scholar Noel Carroll submits (1999, p. 150). The monster is "… an abominable, repugnant, impure thing, a dirty, filthy thing" (Carroll, 1999, p. 150). The monster is "repulsive", an "aberration" (Kawin, 2012, p. 117-118). The monster is also ambiguous, not quite human or unhuman (mushroomoid creatures, werewolves, seed creatures), neither dead nor alive (zombies) (Carroll, 1999, p. 152).

However, above all, the monster is a transgressor of boundaries. Carroll argues that in horror films this is the one factor that can distinguish the monster from the other characters in the film (1999, p. 154). Hutchings writes that "monsters often make visible or foreground aspects of human biology in a manner that renders that biology disgusting". He reminds us that Kristeva "identifies the abject as that which does not 'respect borders, positions, rules' and which 'disturbs identity, system, order'" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4, cited in Hutchings, 2004, p. 36), however, he goes on to point out that Mary Douglas "identifies transgressive crossings of categorical borders as moments not just of danger but also of potential empowerment (Douglas, 1984, pp. 94-113, cited in Hutchings, 2004, p. 37). Kristeva's and Douglas's ideas were explored in Chapter One. Douglas established that divisions of the clean and unclean, for example, can create social order, and in turn the transgression of the boundaries between the two can create disorder. Kristeva emphasises the boundary, arguing that in the crossing of the boundary, the abject reveals the void, a place of horror, in which life is meaningless.

So how is M. Hulot monstrous? He is definitely Other, and an outsider in the modern city. The film viewers see him arrive by bus at the start of the film. He dresses differently to the modern bourgeois citizens. He is also often lost and disoriented in the modern city. His body is intact, but disgusting to the modern citizen, he probably does not wash regularly, as the majority of homes in Paris were only just acquiring bathrooms. His presence threatens

the bourgeois—he reminds them of the world outside of modern Paris, the Paris of their childhoods they have only recently "escaped", and to which they might be expelled. He is a transgressor of boundaries throughout the film.

Transgressive elements can be found in both horror and humour (Carroll, 1999, p. 152). Transgression can form a social critique, states critic Christopher Beech; he maintains that the "transgression in comedies of the early 1930s" such as the Marx Brothers' films was most effective in this social critique (Beech, 2002, p. 17). David Martin-Jones discusses humour and social transgression in his essay "Foolish Bum, Funny Shit: Scatological humour in Hal Hartley's not-so comic Henry Fool"; here he addresses the transgression of bodily fluids and solids from inside to outside of the body. Martin-Jones uses Bakhtin's carnivalesques and the body to show the regenerative process of the carnival and transgressive quality of humour that may be available via the film *Henry Fool* (Martin-Jones, 2013, p. 176). However, Martin-Jones believes that this film is not actually subversive, and so cannot work as effectively as a form of social critique. He argues that this film pokes fun at the "bobos", the "bourgeois-bohemians" with whom Hartley's films find an audience. He submits that the "bobos" believe they are being transgressive in watching a film that crosses social boundaries, but rather they are not being subversive at all, but avoiding engaging with complicated real-life difficulties such as "geo politics" (2013, p. 176).

Similarly, film scholar Geoffrey King claims that the Hollywood gross-out films are not subversive in their transgression of social boundaries (2002). King too employs Bakhtin's carnivalesque. The gross-out comedy generally involves bodily fluids making an unwelcome appearance, such as throwing up in public, or being subject to uncontrollable bowel movements as the result of unknowingly consuming laxatives. The gross-out comedies are generally Hollywood movies such as the *American Pie* film series, beginning in 1999. These comedies cross social boundaries by the appearance of abject bodily substances in public places. Bakhtin's Carnivalesque explores the medieval festival held at Easter. The carnival allows the populace—who are severely repressed by the church and the aristocracy, with a monarch at its head—to invert the usual power relationship, for example a fool's pope may

be elected, allowing the people to ridicule the church without fear of punishment. The carnival also involves the body, eating and drinking excessively.

King states that for some, Bakhtin's Carnivalesque is a cathartic experience of renewal, while for others it is only a temporary hiatus, in which the population "lets off steam"—so as not to cause civil revolt, for example—before returning to their life of oppression (2002, p. 65-67). King concludes that the gross-out comedies fall into the latter reading of the Carnivalesque. These comedies, while appearing to be transgressive—in that many of the events in the films do transgress social norms– in the end are not subversive, but only placate the population, or viewing audience (King, 2002, p. 92). There is some form of release, a "letting off steam", but this is only to enable the populace to return to being obedient automatons. However, in *Play Time* the transgression is subversive and the disruption M. Hulot causes to the social order is not a temporary change, it is permanent.

The architect Joan Ockman also uses Bakhtin's carnivalesque in discussing *Play Time's* banquet scene at the Royal Garden. Ockman argues that, "...the banquet's function 'is to always move things toward' to a better future that changes and renews everything in its path…", and that the transformative powers of the banquet are "rooted in the body" (2000, p. 191). She also suggests that it is adaptation that the carnival brings. She argues it is M. Hulot and his friends who will adapt to the modern architecture. I argue that *Play Time*—while acknowledging that the city its administrator, planners and architects, may have a powerful effect on one's life—suggests that subversive action is possible and can make a positive change. In M. Hulot's case his destructive, monstrous, and subversive action has made the city habitable for people. I argue that it is not M. Hulot and his friends that adapt to the architecture, but it is the architecture that is changed by M. Hulot and made to work for them.

The social order is disturbed in the 1960 film *The Village of the Damned* when the children hold a position of power over the adults. This quiet English village, in which the film is set, has a border which temporarily surrounds it. The whole village, and anyone that crosses the boundary, falls asleep, even the animals, for around three hours. The army is

called in. The person investigating is an academic and lives in the manor house, the rest of the villagers appear to be working class. However, in this film it is not the class boundary which is transgressed. Soon it appears that all the women able to give birth are pregnant, including the unmarried, those whose husbands have been away, and those who have not had sex. Soon are born the children, who turn out to be alien monsters, although for the most part they look like human children, apart from the eyes and hands. In 1979 Robin Wood argued that "…children are the most oppressed section of the population…" and each that generation of adults is "…seeking to mould them into replicas…" of themselves (1979, p. 10). The children do, unlike M. Hulot, kill when they feel threatened but like M. Hulot the children are outsiders, but it is their intelligence, and their non-subservient countenance, which marks them most as different. They are beyond the control of the adults, the children do not take the adults into account, they do as they please, they do what they need to do. The children disturb the social order, the balance between those in control and those who are subservient is disturbed. The children are not "replicas" of the adults, they overturn this aim of the adults and it is this that is most frightening.

The juxtaposition of the monster and what is considered to be normal plays a role in revealing and relieving the repression that the controlling ideology places on a society (Wood, 1979). The "normal" in the modern city is the clean and well-behaved bourgeoisie. M. Hulot represents that which, in the modern city, is viewed as disgusting—the unclean old city where bodily fluids and excrement were readily found in the street. The smell and presence of M. Hulot in the modern city causes alarm for the ultra-clean modern citizens, reminding them of the unwashed bodies, overflowing toilets and repugnant streets of their childhoods. M. Hulot as monster represents the other, he is the outsider in the modern city.

The Royal Garden nightclub

As the Royal Garden opens, while the guests are arriving, the carpenters, and the architect, are still at work. As this scene unfolds the inadequacies of the modern architecture are revealed. It tears people's clothes; and leaves prints on the back of jackets; people get the heels of their shoes stuck in the flooring; the decoration, at head level, in the bar means the bar tender has to constantly bob around it in order to attend to the customers. Due to

the artificial air provided by the air-conditioning system the nightclub is too hot and then too cold. However, the bourgeois guests do not seem to notice these failings.

At the entrance of the nightclub there are glass doors and a door attendant. The border around modern Paris in the film defines the location of a specific demographic—as there is only one type of architecture, there is only one class of people—the bourgeoisie are the only "*proper*" (clean and correct) modern citizens. However, a demographic diversity in the city is initiated when M. Hulot breaks the modern the glass door at the entrance of the nightclub, by accidentally hitting his head on it. The broken glass door is a symbolic gate in the border around modern Paris (*see figure 6.2*). Once this symbolic gate is broken anyone can wander into the Royal Garden, and they do, the club and the city are no longer the exclusive place of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, anyone can enter the city as the closing scene of the film shows, which is discussed below. The door attendant is a symbolic guard who is able to control who can and who cannot enter the nightclub. After the door is broken the guard's power to exclude is removed. This event is the start of the destruction of the modern architecture.

Figure 6.2: Hulot breaks the glass door to the Royal Garden
Image source: Still from Play Time: PlayTime, Jacques Tati (1967) © Les Films de Mon Oncle – Specta Films CEPEC

M. Hulot commits mild social transgressions throughout the film, but what instigates the major transgression is the breaking down of the modern architecture and so the power

it holds over the city. The destruction of the modern architecture occurs when M. Hulot leaps up to grab something stuck on an interior wall feature, this not only brings the feature down, but also the ceiling behind it. The wall feature was in a prominent position, at the front of the room and to the left of the stage where the band plays. When the modern architecture is destroyed chaos ensues. A little club is created within the wreckage and occupied by the working class, the artists, the unfashionable tourists, the counter-culture people who have wandered in through the broken "city gate", and the few bourgeois comrades (*see figure 6.3*). Most of the bourgeoisie leave the Royal Garden, the others stay on till daybreak.

Figure 6.3: The Royal Garden nightclub
Image source: Still from Play Time: PlayTime, Jacques Tati (1967) © Les Films de Mon Oncle – Specta Films CEPEC

Before the destruction the nightclub was the place of the bourgeoisie, almost all of whom were dressed in black and white, but now slowly more colours start to fill the nightclub and then the city. As a result of the destruction of the nightclub and so the city it has become the space of M. Hulot and his friends, it is now their space, the space of the outsiders. They are free to move in a relaxed manner with their bodies and senses, whereas before the modern city prevented this. With the destruction of the modern architecture, people start to have fun, dancing, singing, and eating. The sensuous bodily engagement that was absent from the modern city, till now, begins as the people enter into a freedom

unknown in this city up until this point. A transgression of social boundaries has happened—the social order is disrupted, and new social rules are formed.

The closing scenes of the film emphasise that this change is permanent and not a temporary relief. In the final sequence of the film there is a small traffic roundabout, the centre of which is blossoming with plant life, hitherto unseen in the film. This scene's characters represent a broader demographic diversity, not seen earlier in the film. We see children, and old people, and unfashionable people—the diversity is limited—but the film clearly shows that diversity is one of the key elements to creating human friendly environments.[77] Colin Fournier, architectural historian, writes that, "Our search to understand the city is driven by an idealised desire to improve it, to make it less cruel" (2013, p. 131).

The characters in the film, led by M. Hulot, undertake a subversive action at the Royal Garden nightclub, and create a new way of being within the oppressive modern city, relieving themselves of the oppressive and controlling power. The modern architecture, in *Play Time*, takes the place of the oppressive and controlling power that was held by the medieval church and monarchy—the modern architecture and urbanism is representative of corporate capitalist power.

The harsh, ill-fitting, modern environments in the film create restrictive conditions for the inhabitants of the city—although it is the film viewer who is filled with fear, the modern citizens do not seem to notice—however, in *Play Time* it would be incorrect to read the urban environment as the monster. Applying Wood's theory to this film it is M. Hulot who is the monster. Wood maintains that the monster is the opposite of normality. Normality, he explains, is the dominant ideology—in *Play Time* this is corporate patriarchal capitalism. In this film the city is not the monster, because the modern architecture and all that it entails are the workings of the dominant ideology. In this reading it is M. Hulot who is the monster.

[77] The diversity is limited though, there seems to be little diversity in culture. For example, most of the people at the end of the film seem to be of European appearance; neither do we do see anyone with disability for example, that we know of, though an invisible disability would not be picked up visually.

Conclusion

In Chapter Six *Play Time* has been read as a horror film and M. Hulot as a monster. In the film nature has been eliminated by the modern city. This city provides little sensory stimuli for its inhabitants, dulling their minds. This absence is emphasised throughout the film—in the modern city the surfaces are smooth to the touch, there is no variance in texture, the buildings are rectilinear and for a large part transparent. The urban form consisting of straight lines and right angles seen from outside of the buildings is carried on and repeated through the interior of the building, even the sense of sight is given little to engage with, the built environment is the same throughout the city. The lack of sensory stimuli in the modern city is highlighted in the pharmacy scene, where food has lost its innate substance, and in the green glow one imagines it is tasteless. The city boundary in *Play Time* has a significant role in creating the controlling space. The border around modern Paris keeps out nature. The border is used to control the modern citizens as it is the line they do not wish to cross. The citizens are threatened with being sent beyond the city boundary—they believe the modern city is the right place to be, however, the film viewer knows that this is an illusion.

This chapter has argued that M. Hulot can be read as a monster in *Play Time*. He elicits disgust from the modern citizens, as he represents the unclean beyond the city boundary. Monsters are outsiders and transgressors of boundaries. M. Hulot does not live in the modern city, he is not a part of this modern world. The city belongs to the bourgeois, however, when M. Hulot breaks the symbolic gate to the city, the glass door at the Royal Garden nightclub, anyone can now come into the nightclub, and into the city. M. Hulot creates transgressions throughout the film but his major transgression occurs when he destroys the modern architecture. When it is destroyed people start to engage with each other, and with their bodies and their senses, taking joy in eating, dancing, and singing. The modern city is not the monster, it is M. Hulot who is the monster, in destroying the modern architecture, he destroys the corporate capitalist power within it.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that the modern city depicted in *Play Time* frames nature as abject, and therefore banishes it. In *Play Time* this abjectification of nature extends to the human body and thus is used to control the citizenry. This control is embedded within the modern corporate architecture, the power of which is broken when M. Hulot as the monster destroys it. The abject has a power within it, it works at a personal level—psychological and physical—which is hinged to the social, opening it to the political. This thesis also argued that because of Tati's close relationship with Paris, *Play Time,* in its representation of the city, is a filmic document. This is due to Tati's knowledge of and experience and connections, both emotional and physical, with Paris. *Play Time* as a filmic document can inform our understanding of the city and our approaches to the design of architecture and the 21st century city.

The distinction between the clean and unclean contributes to the creation of social order, as explained by Mary Douglas. We clean our environments to create order. However, what is thought to be clean changes across time and place. The cleansing rituals a society agrees upon for itself includes both the physical and the social. We behave in certain agreed upon ways in order to belong to our social groups. In Julia Kristeva's work, social control is also political. The abject has a power embedded within it, which can be used politically to control the citizenry. The order imposed on people within a society benefits someone, or a collective or organisation such as the Church, as in the example Kristeva provides. In the case of the world represented in the film *Play Time* it is patriarchal capitalism. The abject saves us from having to look into the void, where there is no possibility of connecting with anyone, where we are met with the meaninglessness of life. The cleansing rituals create meaning, making things seem important, but if the importance of the ritual is taken away, as in the case of the Church again, for example, a person is faced with the meaninglessness of life. Kristeva argues that God was replaced with science and politics, a new kind of faith (1982, p. 134-133). In the modern city depicted in *Play Time*, we do not see any cleansing rituals as everything is seemingly always already clean, as shown in the film by the man with his empty dustpan. One can argue that the modern city is symbolic of science and technology itself, manifest in the reality of the everyday life of the modern citizen. In going through the ritual

of daily living in the new city they live out their belief, that the technocratic rational ideas embedded within the architecture creates the "*propre"* (clean and correct) city to which, like a congregation, they can belong.

The threat of meaninglessness is the power that enables the control. This power is able to control the modern citizens; in the case of *Play Time* this is through exclusion, being expelled from the city. We can imagine the modern citizens live in despair, without the illusions that hold them up, the modern bourgeois is lost beyond the city boundary, in the world that M. Hulot and the workers inhabit. It is the threat of the meaninglessness that facilitates political control. Robin Wood reveals the workings of political control. It is also about belonging, but he adds an economic dimension. The ideal citizen is an automaton, someone in a monogamous heterosexual relationship, with a dull job (Wood, 1979, p. 8). The automaton is obedient, earning and importantly spending, filling the accounts of capitalism, not rioting, or even disagreeing with the current powers of state; these are the citizens seen in *Play Time*.

The distinction between the clean and the unclean can create a social order (Douglas, 1991), which can also create boundaries (Kristeva, 1982). In *Play Time*, modern Paris, in its abjectification of nature, has expelled it beyond the city boundary. This expulsion separates the city and nature, including aspects which link the human experience to nature. The psychological manipulations within the abjectification of nature are used to control the modern citizens. In the film *Play Time* the modern citizen does not want to be associated with nature, and ejected beyond the city boundary. The threat of being expelled from the city is used to control the modern citizens. In *Play Time* there is no evidence of a concrete force that might expel the citizens, instead the subjects' own belief systems—implanted in them by the ideology embedded within the modern city and its architecture—are used in the creation of this threat. The political power, within this city, is held in by the capitalist patriarchy, the dominant ideology (Wood, 1979), which is embedded within the city's modern corporate architecture. In modern Paris as shown in *Play Time* the city is ultra-clean, the dirt has been removed, nature is abject and jettisoned by the city. The bourgeoisie are well behaved. If the residents keep to the rules of the modern city, they can stay—but in

order to belong, they have to surrender their wants, and even their needs, and conform to the model of the ultra-hygienic, modern, corporate, bourgeois citizen.

The modernisation of the Paris sewers in the mid-19th century had a huge influence on Paris, it effected a deeper a separation between nature and the city—and between nature and people, as Gandy has argued. *Play Time* offers a scenario of the final result of this separation. The study of Haussmann's works illustrates the city that Tati laments losing in *Play Time.* The destruction of large sections of Paris in the post-World War II period contributes to the reasons why Paris is depicted the way it is in the film. *Play Time* depicts Paris as a city of modern glass and steel towers, whereas traditional Paris is only shown in the film as immaterial—that is, as reflected images. The Paris of Tati's childhood and youth is absent. The putrid state of the Paris city streets of the early 19th century slowly transformed to the ultra-clean streets shown in *Play Time*—this modern city is ultra-hygienic, but it extinguishes almost all nature, the plants and animals, and many aspects of human life. Paradoxically, it could seem that one of the key drivers for the modernisation of the city, cleaning it up to diminish disease, was in *Play Time* its undoing. Tati argues that hygiene has been taken too far; in *Play Time* we are left with a clean but lifeless city.

Film provides us knowledge and understanding of the city that other more rational texts may not; these texts often leave out aspects such as memory, the imaginary, and the somatic, which make up the complex human experience. In *Play Time* the urban planners and architects of this fictional city did not take this human complexity into the design of modern Paris. Film also provides a common point of reference, a means of exchanging ideas and stories. Film can provide a life-like picture of a place, or set—taking the limits of representation into account—it provides us with something of what the city feels like physically, what it might feel like to be in that space. In turn, film can enable us to contemplate and understand something about our own spaces and their significance for our lives, and if, as is the case for the old city of Paris in *Play Time*, they are drastically changed or totally demolished, the loss we experience.

Tati's artistic motivation in making *Play Time* can be seen in his experience of Haussmann's Paris, and in turn his experience of the modernisation of the city in the post-war period; his artistic motivation also stems from his connections—both physical and emotional—with Paris; his knowledge of modern architecture; and his personal connections with modern architects, all of which allows us to read *Play Time* as a filmic document that can be used to understand the city.

The film viewer does not see or hear a direct reference to Le Corbusier, but his influence is felt in the film; *Play Time* echoes the tabula rasa and glass towers of his *Voisin Plan*. Le Corbusier's ideas, developed before World War II, were present in post-war Paris. He himself was also present, actively creating more works, and personally influencing politicians' ideas regarding the redevelopment of post-World War II Paris. Le Corbusier and his contemporaries changed the way architecture and cities appear and are experienced. While there were many people and forces that contributed to the development of modern architecture, Le Corbusier had a great influence on other architects, due in part to his skill in self-promotion; he also became a key figure of modern architecture for the general public. Tati worked from the perspective of a non-architect—how modern architecture appears to the popular mind. He knew the work of modern architects, but he is not critiquing the architecture from the perspective of an architect, but from a user of that architecture and the cities it creates. What *Play Time* shows is an architecture that is hygienic, but to the point of being sterile, lifeless. The Paris of *Play Time* fails to provide a comfortable place for the body, and social communion, and it prevents any connection to place.

In modern Paris, as it is shown in *Play Time*, the body's natural elements and the possibility of it behaving unpredictably, threaten the order and ultra-cleanliness of the city. In the film people are represented as bloodless—as cut-outs, mannequins and even ghosts—the diminished body no longer poses a threat to the hygiene and order of the modern city. The modern bourgeois citizens are automatons, life-like creatures, but without self-determination. The modern city with its lack of sensory stimuli due to its ultra-cleanliness and aesthetic hospital-like architecture has created a dull and obedient citizenry. Nature has been ejected from the city or hidden from sight, the infrastructure that carries natural

substances such as water and human waste is buried deep within the city. In the modern city nature is abject, even the natural aspects of the human body are seemingly denied.

While *Play Time* is a comedy, aspects of the horror genre are seen the film, in themes such as nature, the body, space and boundaries, and aspects of the monster are read in M. Hulot. Some aspects he shares with the monster are his outsider status, and his transgression of boundaries and significantly as a disruptor of normality He is also viewed as disgusting by the modern bourgeoisie as he represents the old city, from where they have come, ripe smells, emanating from sources such as little-washed bodies and inadequate toilets. M. Hulot, as the monster, breaks the control the modern architecture has over the city, when he destroys it at the climax of the film.

Before this destruction the city belonged to the ultra-clean corporate bourgeoisie. In the ensuing chaos people re-engage with themselves and each other, they move freely, a variety of colour enters the city, plant life appears in the roundabout featured as a merry-go-round, a diversity in demographics emerges, although limited, the film clearly shows that diversity is one of the keys to creating cities that are "less cruel" (Fournier, 2013, p. 131). In destroying the modern architecture, M. Hulot destroyed the corporate capitalist power embedded within it. This destruction opens the possibility for people to delight in themselves and in each other. They begin to engage with their environment and their senses, having the restrictions of the modern architecture lifted, the city is awakened to new possibilities of being.

This thesis sheds new light on the film *Play Time*, contributing to the Tati literature, by using Kristeva's theory of the abject. It provides an in-depth investigation into the separation of nature from the modern city as depicted in the film and, importantly, showing what lies beneath this representation—the abjectification of nature. In the modern city nature has been almost completely removed from the city, the ultra-hygienic yet unliveable environment—creating a striking contrast to the Paris of earlier times with its inadequate sewerage system, that meant its streets ran with human excrement and other rotting organic materials. The abjectification of nature creates a highly controlled environment, in

turn controlling the modern citizens. Reading M. Hulot as the monster in conjunction with the idea of abject nature provides a new reading of the film, investigating how these controlling mechanisms work and how they are finally defeated. This research also provides new insights into *Play Time* as a filmic document that can be used to understand the city; what this reading shows is that our human complexity—the rational, emotional, the imaginary and the somatic—and the recognition of ourselves as a part of nature, and not separate from it, are necessary for creating humane architecture and cities. An understanding of the complexity of the human being is necessary for creating cities that work well for the people who live in them; the city depicted in *Play Time* did not take the complexity of the human being into consideration. *Play Time* is a document that contributes to our understanding of the city, both in 1967 and today. The complexity of the human experience should be integrated into our planning and design of cities. This filmic document, *Play Time*, is able to inform our experience, our understanding, and approaches to the design of architecture and the city in the 21st century.

Further research could usefully explore how the complexity of the human being—the emotional, the imaginary, the body, and the rational mind, for example—and our interrelationships with nature are currently being integrated within the planning policies of our cities. A multi-disciplinary in-depth study could be undertaken to ask, is it possible to use the arts, film for example, in conjunction with data from more rational sources, in applications and objections to proposed changes for the city. This question could be asked by undertaking various case studies within local communities of various cities, using methods of ethnographic filmmaking and visual anthropology in addition to quantitative data collection.

Play Time presents a complexity. Tati shares a lament—with the people of Paris, and those that care for it—for the Paris that has been destroyed in the rapid modern urbanisation in the post-World War II period, and the way of life that has been lost. Throughout the film Tati is making a negative critique of the modern architecture and its effects on city life. However, the very last shot of the film, after the joy of the merry-go-round-about scene, is of an almost black screen, darkness, with only a few highway lights

discernible. I argue that Tati is saying with this final shot, that yes the city is changing, and no it cannot be taken back to what it was before—but to a degree, like M. Hulot and his friends, it can be occupied in a way that provides some joy. What is ahead is unknown, all that can be done is to step into it, and in doing so hopefully find there some play time, some joy, with others.

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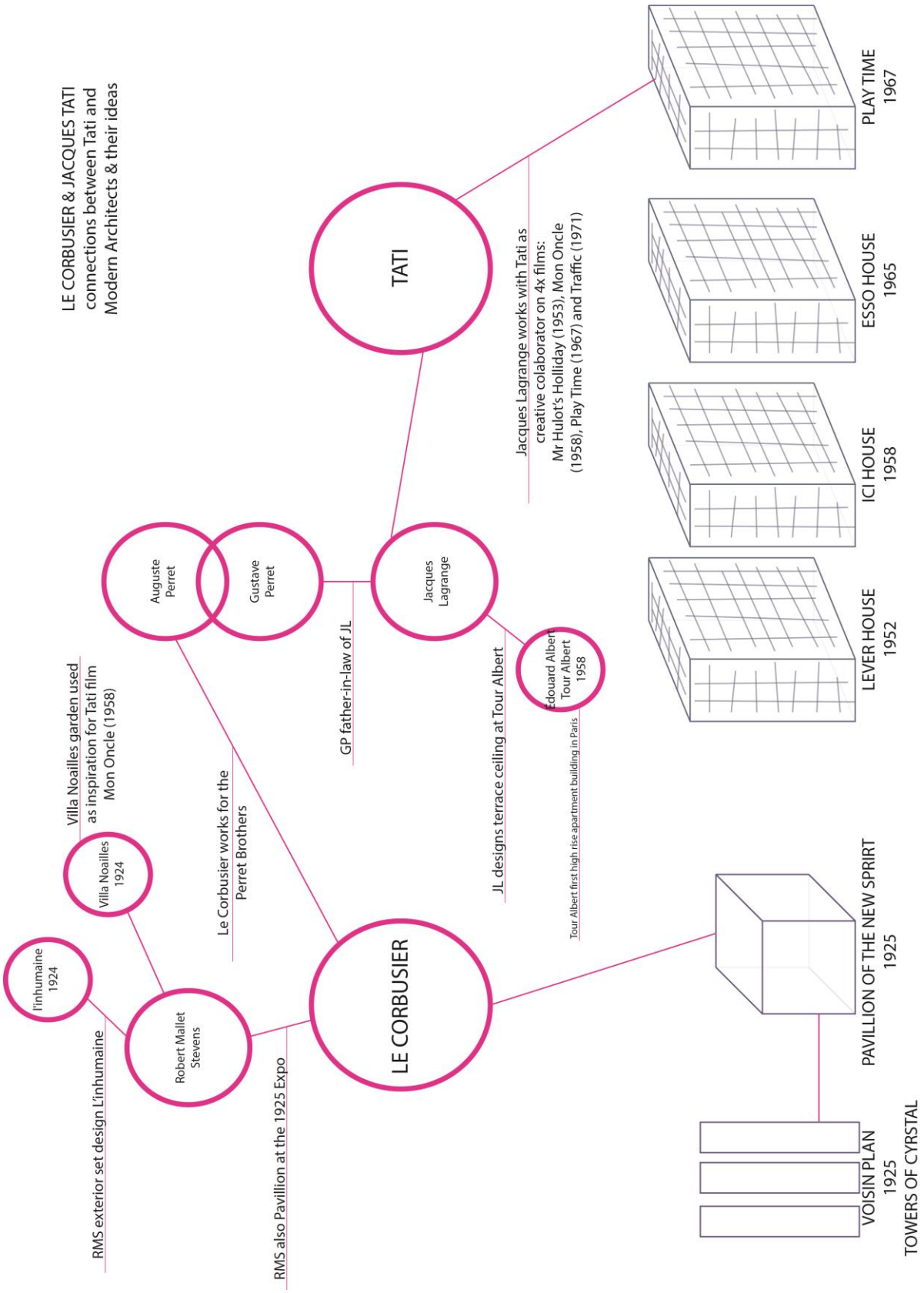
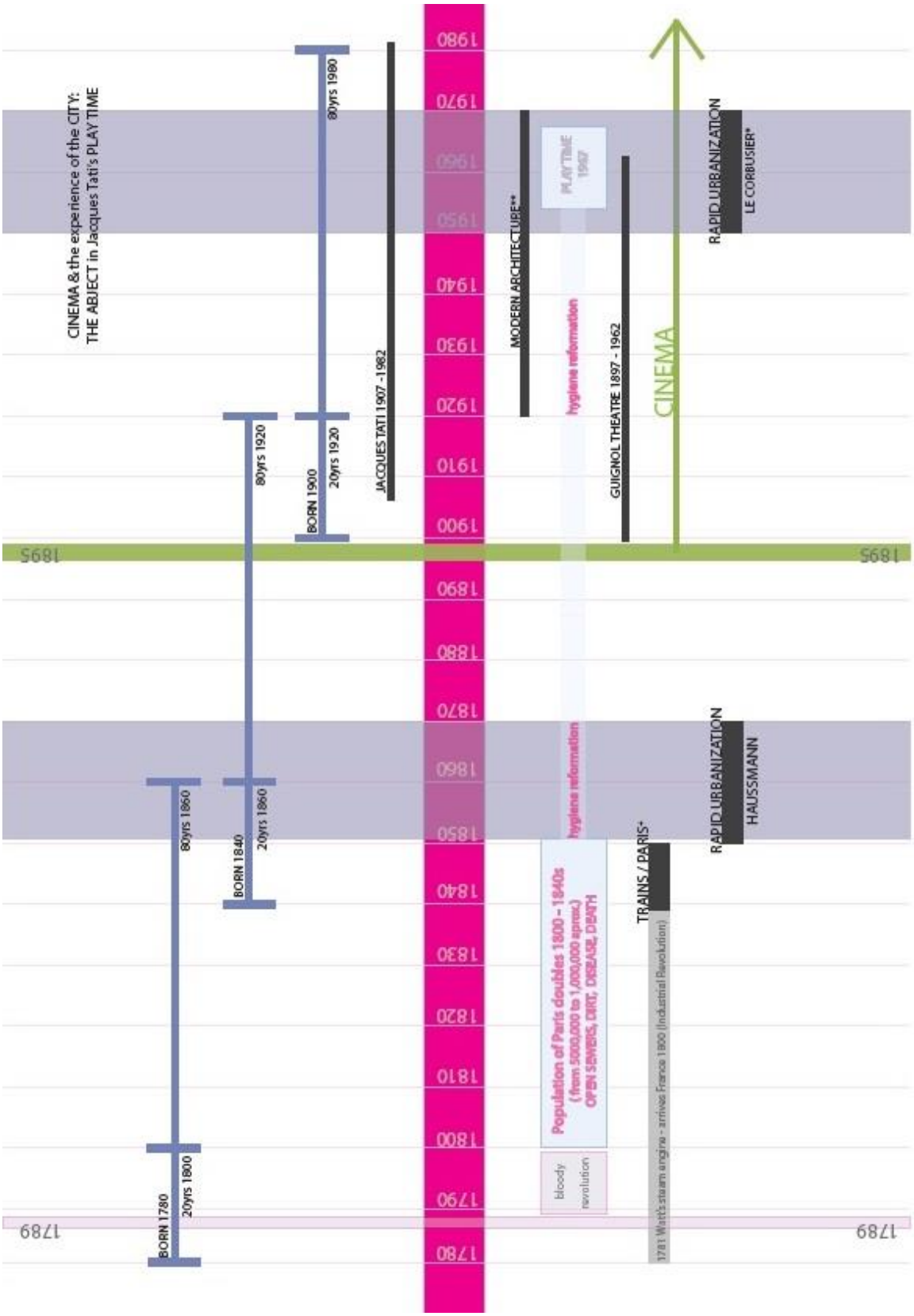
APPENDICES

Appendix 01 Tati and Le Corbusier connections: creative, personal and professional



Appendix 02 Paris time line—1789 to 1967 from bloody the street to the ultra-clean street in *Play Time*



Appendix 03 Billancourt: Tati and Le Corbusier